

**PUBLIC LITURGY AS THE PARADIGM FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION:
SHIFTING A LOCAL CONGREGATION FROM SANCTUARY TO STREET**

**A Professional Project
presented to
the Faculty of the
Claremont School of Theology**

**In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry**

**by
Arthur Lawrence Cribbs, Jr
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CLAREMONT
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Arthur Lawrence Cribbs, Jr.

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Faculty Committee:

Helene Slessarev-Jamir, Chairperson
Lincoln Galloway

Dean: Dennis R. MacDonald

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ABSTRACT

Public Liturgy as the Paradigm for Social Transformation: Shifting a Local Congregation from Sanctuary to Street

by

Arthur Lawrence Cribbs, Jr.

This professional project examines methods used in two United Church of Christ congregations in Southern California to engage in public liturgy based on local and international models of social justice ministries. The ontology of social transformation in the 20th Century forged by religious institutions, civil rights organizations, and progressive social movements is analyzed through the lens of prominent and contemporary individuals whose contributions determined the actual impact on societies. This project's purpose is to recognize the importance of elevating local issues that resonant across traditional barriers of race, class, gender, and geography to inspire corporate imagination that can motivate and connect disaffected persons to the plight of the "other" in societies.

Specifically, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the American Civil Rights movement, the Rev. Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Germany's Confessing Church during World War II, Cardinal Jaime Sin and the People Power Movement in the Philippines during the waning reign of Ferdinand Marcos, and Mahatma Gandhi's demonstration of his satyagraha philosophy in India provide a portrait of local actions that created historical, global events.

That is the backdrop used to design modest opportunities for the two congregations in this project to deliberately organize and utilize easily accessible resources to address issues within their targeted service areas. This project intends to operate within the framework of those congregations situated in urban and suburban communities where worship focuses on a narrow understanding of traditional religious practices.

The project concludes with a critique of the roles individuals play within congregations to embody their religious beliefs through promoting events within the sanctuary of the churches and outside those walls on the streets where they invite and involve public safety personnel, professionals, politicians, and a variety of other religious groups to participate.

Finally, newspaper articles and media coverage of events sponsored by the two congregations are included as examples of the churches' effective presence in the Public Square toward shifting from placid sanctuaries to turbulent relevance in the streets.

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Preface

People in every nation on every continent throughout every generation have had living role models who demonstrated how to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly.” Those human examples are known by many titles: rabbi, priest, imam, pastor, guru, ju-ju, Queen Mother, Chief, witch-doctor, Pharaoh, emperor, griot, advocate, monk, apostle, teacher, philosopher, and parent.

Their names are legendary, including Moses, Elijah, Deborah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary, Priscilla, Jesus, Elizabeth, Paul, Phoebe, Lao-Tse, Muhammad, Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Fatima, Moon, and Carver.

In the 20th century, one of the bloodiest and most war-saturated eras of human history, ordinary people accomplished extraordinary feats within the context of their social reality. Among them were Jose Marti (Cuba), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Germany), Mahatma Gandhi (India), Anwar Sadat (Egypt), Mother Theresa (India), Yitzhak Rabin (Israel), Martin Luther King, Jr. (United States of America), Dorothy Day (United States of America), Oscar Romero (El Salvador), Cesar Chavez (United States of America), Lech Walesa (Poland), Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Rosa Parks (United States of America), Desmond Tutu (South Africa), and Winnie Mandela (South Africa).

At the same time, there is a host of lesser known and unnamed s/heroes who touch our lives everyday. Coaches, neighbors, volunteers, civil liberty advocates, students, nurses, care-takers, service station attendants, and strangers we encounter at critical moments.

Another group of significant people who teach us how to become better human beings are the indigent, foreigner, and suffering indigenous persons who have lost control

of their destinies. Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann stated at a roundtable seminar in Miami, Florida, “Justice is knowing what belongs to whom and giving it back.”¹

Throughout history individuals have forged courageous campaigns to transform societies. They have used the apparatus of faith-based organizations to prod religious communities into being engaged in social justice activities for the purpose of making systemic changes. Their efforts often resulted in ostracism, rejection, persecution, and assassination. Yet, the correctness of their commitments inspired others to share their visions and keep the spirit of their work alive and potent.

Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder criticized Reinhold Niebuhr’s latter life conversion from pacifism to militarism and his subsequent concept that people “who embrace the message of nonresistance have a shallow understanding of sin and evil in the world.”²

According to Terrence Rynne, “There is no cheap grace for a Christian who follows Jesus’ way. Throughout history, those who practice nonviolence in violent societies have been met with resistance and scorn. Those who embrace nonviolence, however, believe not only in the cross but also in the resurrection. Niebuhr, by exclusively stressing the human predicament, leaves no room for the message of regeneration and salvation that is the good news of the gospel.”³

Rynne raises pertinent questions about the history of Christianity when the Church has not followed the nonviolent teaching of Jesus. In fact, he contends the Church has aligned itself with the Roman Empire that “believes in the myth of

¹ Walter Brueggemann. “Holy Saturday,” lecture, Clergy Roundtable, Coral Gables United Church of Christ, Miami, FL, January 6, 2004.

² Terrence J. Rynne. *Gandhi and Jesus: The Saving Power of Nonviolence* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 108.

³ Rynne, 108

redemptive violence” instead of the ‘spirit of restorative justice’. He asks, “Why is it not more obvious to Christians that the Sermon on the Mount is the way forward? Why do we still stand back from following the way of the nonviolent Jesus?”⁴

While many Christian denominations are reluctant to take aggressive action in the vanguard of social change, there are some people inside those institutions who have effectively manipulated resources to deliver vital support to strategic groups at the center of controversial, social issues. Their contributions have successfully enabled small, local cells to expand into significant movements. Even when religious organizations have been antagonistic toward those individuals and other progressive elements within their judicatories, financial support, personnel, and material aid have been given along with fervent prayers for tenacity, vision, strategic planning, and coalition-building. Such liturgical intervention has helped to overcome obstacles and, on occasion, brought reluctant religious groups into the struggle for justice.

I was converted to pacifism at the age of 17 years old. Although I had received a Congressional appointment to attend the United States Naval Academy, my life took a turn that put me on another path. It has led to pastoral ministry and my conviction that public liturgy exemplifies the true meaning of ‘church’. Public liturgy is the outward expression of faith through the demonstrative practice of integrating worldly concerns with spiritual disciplines.

This paper examines local events in San Diego and San Marino, California, where individuals used their faith communities to draw public attention to social justice issues. They placed themselves and pushed me as their pastor into the Public Square. Together,

⁴ Rynne, 2.

we conducted public liturgies to bring a religious presence to address economic disparity, racism, public service, and discrimination against gays, lesbians, and immigrants.

My public participation in the campaign to defeat Proposition 8, a California ballot measure to ban same-sex marriage, would not have been my choice for political activism without the urging of members of my congregation in San Marino. Although I strongly opposed Prop 8, other issues like poverty, gang violence, substance abuse, and under-funded public schools would have dominated my time and energy. But, because San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ had completed the process to become an “*Open and Affirming Church*” recognized and certified by the UCC two years before I was called as its pastor, I was obligated to get directly involved in the “No on 8” campaign.

“*Open and Affirming*” is a process within the UCC that allows local congregations to engage in study, discussions, discernment and a vote to welcome openly gay, lesbian, transgender and bi-sexual persons into the congregation as members; to call an openly gay, ordained clergy as pastor; or to hire a gay person on the church staff.

In San Diego, I was a member of the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, an organization that worked directly with documented and undocumented immigrants. I participated in the annual *La Posada* at Border State Park in San Ysidro to commemorate the struggle, injuries and deaths of people who crossed into the United States from Mexico.

Every year public liturgy is performed above the beach at the fenced separation of the two nations. People gather on both sides of the international border to sing, pray,

give testimony in English and Spanish. We honor the memory of people who lost their lives in a continued effort to remove barriers that separate immigrants from their families.

Although there were some members of Christian Fellowship Congregational United Church of Christ who disagreed with my public position against draconian immigration policies, there remained sufficient support within the congregation for my ministry. Some church members joined me along the border. They encouraged their pastor to stay involved on the frontlines.

There are always individuals who make change happen. Institutions almost never provide early or direct leadership to forge change. When prodded from within and outside the institutional church, support and resources can be wrestled away and funneled to people who give their lives for social justice. Those angelic witnesses are not deterred by disappointment. They are determined to speak out and stand up in solidarity with others for what they truly believe are important concerns that threaten the quality of life.

Public liturgy as presented in this project is the act of addressing critical concerns within the service area of two local UCC congregations. International models of public liturgy are identified as examples where people of faith confronted local disparities and issues that grew into significant social movements.

While it is not the objective of this project to transform a local congregation into a global movement, it is my intent to use the specific issues in the West San Gabriel Valley to motivate members of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ to develop strategies that can effectively address concerns of individuals and families most directly affected by adversity.

CHAPTER 1 ***Introduction***

Problem

The problem addressed in this project is the resistance among members of local congregations within the United Church of Christ to design, engage, and participate in events that transform the public sphere into public liturgical space.

Importance of Problem

This project undertakes a process to engage members of the San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ in Southern California, to use their facilities and resources to promote, support, and sponsor activities that address three specific issues affecting people who live in the service area of their church campus: racism, public safety, and economic ambiguity.

This project will design, develop, and execute preliminary opportunities to prepare the congregation for more significant involvement in social justice action in the future that will propel its members into the Public Square with an expanded or broader understanding of worship and ministry.

Citing examples from the 20th Century American Civil Rights movement and South African liberation movements that began with people of faith working within the context of their local churches, this project will illustrate the influence a congregation can have on surrounding communities by touching the lives of persons who are not associated with the church, but who are affected by social justice elements within their environment. Rooted in faith traditions, strategies are designed to empower congregants to exercise moral and ethical leadership on behalf of poor, marginalized, and desperate people who live and work within the vicinity of San Marino Congregational UCC.

The project examines faith-based social justice actions that reflect God's preferential option for the poor, as derived from liberation thought, nonviolent movements, and a progressive Christian interpretation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mainline denominations like the United Church of Christ are losing their cutting edge, dynamic, prophetic voice in contemporary American society because they have softened their message and have not consistently used mass media to broaden the scope of their appeal. They have left the streets where they once protested the injustices suffered by the poor, marginalized, migrant, or directed at other United States residents based on their country of origin, religion, racial and ethnic differences.

Most people who live in the United States at the dawn of the 21st Century are confronted by issues that are pervasive and perennial. From healthcare to housing; from poor quality education to infant mortality; from substance abuse to domestic violence; from disenfranchisement to political apathy, the list of critical needs in the United States is overwhelming. Although worshiping communities from small storefront to large institutional churches are engaged in social service outreach (charity), these efforts may resemble an impossible task of 'using a teaspoon to empty the ocean' if the enormity of need among people in their service area is carefully analyzed.

This project is undertaken during a special period in American history when corporations and institutions face unprecedented economic restraints. The United Church of Christ and other mainline denominations are forced to reduce their financial and personnel resources. Where they once provided robust youth and young adult ministries, for example, the United Church of Christ has experienced a steady decline of membership and financial support which led to cuts in staff and termination of its once fabled *Youth Magazine*, a monthly publication for Christian Education directors and youth leaders in the denomination. Such actions have stymied youth leadership

development within mainline denominations. In return, youth and young adults are writing off most mainline denominations as ‘irrelevant’ and ‘out of touch’. Many have given up on the UCC which used to be considered the most progressive Protestant denomination in the United States of America. They feel it no longer provides sufficient, substantive leadership opportunities to achieve or inspire significant personal or social transformation toward salvation or liberation.

At this history making juncture, the United States has witnessed Barack Obama, the first viable African American presidential candidate of a major political party, successfully campaigned and won the White House. Undoubtedly, President Obama’s world view, political ideology, and the socio-economic issues and policies he articulated during his campaign were shaped in the crucible of “conscientization” that reflected the Christ-centered, transformative, prophetic ministry of the Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Wright, Jr., the retired pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois.¹

Dr. Wright’s preaching and ministry were in the forefront of faithful public witness while other religious leaders and congregations lagged behind in their commitment to be the moral or ethical standard-bearers that past generations expected from the UCC and depended on to forge a courageous, spiritual network.

The United Church of Christ as a Standard-Bearer for Justice Ministries

The United Church of Christ has a legacy that includes defending African captives who were destined for slavery when they were placed onboard the *La Amistad*, a Spanish-owned vessel that illegally transported human cargo in 1853.² That incident led to the founding of the American Missionary Association, a leading 19th Century

¹ Barack Obama, *Audacity of Hope* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006).

² “The Amistad,” <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Amistad-%281841%29> (accessed November 27, 2008).

abolitionist organization that eventually started 500 academies and colleges for freed blacks after the Civil War.

During the middle of the 20th Century, the United Church of Christ supported the Southern Christian Leadership Conference under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1961, the Rev. Andrew Young of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries was sent to Atlanta, Georgia, to work closely with Dr. King.³ Ten years later in 1971, the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis was deployed to Wilmington, North Carolina, to help register blacks to vote. Arrested and charged with arson, Chavis and nine other civil rights workers were convicted and sent to prison. They became known as the “Wilmington Ten.”⁴

The United Church of Christ Office of Communication executive director the Rev. Everett Parker and the UCC Commission for Racial Justice executive director the Rev. Dr. Charles Cobb rallied to draw international attention to the ‘Wilmington Ten’ case that began in 1971.⁵ That campaign succeeded when the federal appeals court overturned their convictions and released Chavis and the nine other young people from prison in 1980.⁶

Parker was also responsible for changing broadcast practices throughout the South during the Civil Rights movement in which blacks were not hired and no programs were aired regarding black life or activities. Through Parker’s commitment, WLBT-TV in

³ Tim Connor and Tom Pendergast, “Andrew Young Biography.” <http://biography.jrank.org/pages/2439/Young-Andrew.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

⁴ Angela Mack. “Chavis Sees Wilmington 10 Role as ‘Badge of Honor’.” *Wilmington Star News*, February 2, 2006, <http://www.starnewsonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060202/NEWS/60202002/-1/news28> (accessed November 27, 2008).

⁵ William C. Winslow, “Racial Justice Advocate, Charles Cobb, Dies.” *Worldwide Faith News*, December 30, 1998, <http://www.wfn.org/1999/01/msg00025.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

⁶ “Wilmington Ten,” *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilmington_Ten (accessed November 27, 2008).

Jackson, Mississippi, lost its license to operate.⁷ The television station's license was awarded to the United Church of Christ and Tougaloo College, a historically-related Black college of the UCC founded in 1867 by the American Missionary Association.

The United Church of Christ Office of Communication, Inc. remains a powerful, respected force in media and telecommunications as it has standing before Congress and the United States Supreme Court. I served as executive director of that agency from 1996 to 1999.

When I was sent by the United Church of Christ to work with six local churches in Los Angeles, California, following racial violence in the aftermath of the 1992 trial of four white Los Angeles Police Department officers who were acquitted in the beating of Rodney King, a black motorist, my assignment was continuing a long held UCC commitment to under gird regional and local congregations in social justice activities. My task included organizing a joint response by those churches along with community-based organizations to the racial tension that saturated parts of the African American, Latino, and Korean communities around Los Angeles.

Unfortunately, there remain local UCC congregations that tend to avoid social responsibility rather than challenge unjust economic, political, and militaristic principles, values, and structures. According to former United Church of Christ President the Rev. Dr. Paul H. Sherry, the late Rev. Dr. Charles Cobb often said, "The UCC can always be counted on to do the right thing — when it is pushed."⁸ More can be done 'to push' local churches to do what is right. Within religious leadership a greater emphasis is

⁷ Amy Goodman, "The FCC & Censorship: Legendary Media Activist Everett Parker on the Revocation of WLBT's TV License in the 1960s for Shutting Out Voices of the Civil Rights Movement." Democracy Now, March 6, 2008, http://www.democracynow.org/2008/3/6/the_fcc_censorship_legendary_media_activist (accessed November 27, 2008).

⁸ Clifford L. Willis, "United Church of Christ Leaders Remember the Ministry of Charles Cobb," Worldwide Faith News, July 2, 1999, <http://www.wfn.org/1999/07/msg00031.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

placed on stabilizing finances and structures at the expense of withdrawing from outward demands for gospel-based social justice action. So, they insist on operating in a maintenance mode.

Mainline pastors must work to restore public confidence in their denominations and demonstrate clear, consistent commitments to social justice by standing up, going public with indignation, and doubling their resolve to advocate in solidarity with those who are denied, neglected, abandoned, and wasted by social and political systems that destroy human dignity and trample humanity. We must blaze a path toward the recovery of the soul of America.

I love my denomination, the United Church of Christ, and am staunchly committed to it as an ordained minister. But, there is much more we can do to overcome what I perceive as a ‘spiritually-anemic’ religious organization that has lost its appetite to do controversial, difficult and demanding justice ministries.

There is an ideological-theological divide within the UCC between conservatives and liberals on issues such same gender-loving marriage and the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy.⁹ Although human sexuality has long been studied, argued and decided at the national level of the denomination, many local congregations and at least one Conference (Puerto Rico) have voted to leave the church over those issues.

The denomination’s national leadership has not found a way to stop the hemorrhaging or heal persons who have been hurt across the spectrum of debate. At the same time, many people are facing difficult economic challenges and have not found enough support from their local congregations. They feel left alone without a

⁹ For information about the religious challenge to California’s Proposition 8, see J. Bennett Guess, “Religious Bodies Issue Legal Challenge to California’s Proposition 8,” United Church News, November 8, 2008, [http:// www. ucc. org /news/vote-by-ucc-puerto-rico.html](http://www.ucc.org/news/vote-by-ucc-puerto-rico.html) (accessed November 27, 2008).

compassionate presence, resulting in the further erosion of membership and church growth.

The United Church of Christ is open to all people. It has designed a national campaign with the slogan, “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”¹⁰ The invitation is extended broadly as a means to bring ‘alienated, un-churched’ people into the sanctuary. But the need is for members of the church to go outside where most people work, play, and avoid the sanctuary.

The church seeks to be a “safe space” for women and families who have been hurt by other faith traditions. African American mothers have sobbed in my church office after they were refused by their pastors to have funeral services for their dead children conducted in their own churches because the child died of AIDS or was open about his or her homosexuality. Women who contracted HIV/AIDS from their husbands have sat in my office in tears because they were made to feel ashamed and unwanted at church events. They were denied opportunities to participate in preparing and serving meals at church-sponsored dinners.¹¹

Clergy Resistance to Justice Movements

At the same time, some clergy and lay leaders in Southern California along the Mexico-United States border have directed their congregations to fight against Mexican immigrants and migrant workers, contending they pose a threat to jobs in low income areas. They have made charges against immigrant students who do not speak English, suggesting they are a tax burden requiring undue, extraordinary, and special social services.

¹⁰ See “God Is Still Speaking,” home page of United Church of Christ, <http://www.ucc.org/god-is-still-speaking/about/> (accessed November 27, 2008).

¹¹ “Changing Faces of AIDS,” prod. Mario Barnabe and Art Cribbs, San Diego, CA: KGTV 10, October 5, 2002.

There are some churches, including African American congregations, that are often seen as citadels of xenophobia because of their complicity with anti-immigrant advocates and organizations that foster notions of employment insecurity because of an increase in the number of poor people arriving in the United States from Mexico, Central America, East Africa, and China.

In Southern California, for example, Black pastors supported political campaigns like Proposition 187 in 1994 that would have denied health care, education and welfare benefits to (undocumented) immigrants. However, U.S. District Court Judge Mariana Pfaelzer granted its opponents' request for a restraining order, which prevented it from taking effect. He ruled the proposition was unconstitutional.

Judge Pfaelzer's ruling strikes down portions of the initiative that would have required law enforcement, teachers, social service and health care workers to verify a person's immigration status. Under Proposition 187, they would have had to report illegals to authorities and to deny them social service, health care and education benefits.¹²

Despite their own experiences and those of many of their parishioners who escaped violence, brutality and a history of discrimination based on race or religion, some African American pastors managed to set aside what they knew and joined voices and behaviors with their former enemies in public attacks against Mexican immigrants, migrant workers, and same gender-loving couples.

Another example of how pastors and religious leaders have performed to limit equality for all citizens in the United States is seen in the passage of Proposition 8 in California on November 4, 2008.

¹² "Most of California's Prop. 187 Ruled Unconstitutional," All Politics, Cable News Network, March 19, 1998, [http:// www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/03/19/prop.187](http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/03/19/prop.187) (accessed on March 18, 2009).

Proposition 8 sought to insert language into the California Constitution that would define marriage as a “union between one man and one woman,” thus, usurping the rights of gays and lesbians to marry in the state.

Proponents of the initiative timed their actions to coincide with the national elections that included on the ballot Senator Barack Obama, the first African American presidential candidate nominated by a major party. A coalition of Mormons, Catholics, Evangelicals, and conservative African American clergy helped to fund Proposition 8 and preached from their pulpits support of the ban on gay marriage.

While exit polls showed that 59 percent of Catholics backed Democratic President-elect Barack Obama, they turned around and voted for Prop. 8 by 64 percent to 36 percent. The exit polls showed that the one-third of voters who attended church weekly supported the measure by an overwhelming 84 percent to 16 percent, compared with the 83 percent opposition from the one-fifth of voters who said they never attend religious observances. "What the exit polls say is that religion trumps party affiliation when it comes to social issues," said Mark DiCamillo, director of the Field Poll. The exit poll was done by Edison Media Research. It also trumped racial identification.

While Obama publicly backed the "No on Prop. 8" effort, African American voters had no trouble voting overwhelmingly for the man who (is) the nation's first black president and then voting 70 percent in favor of Prop. 8, exit polls showed.¹³

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Call for Clergy to Act

Such behavior on the part of religious leaders reminds us why Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. determined it was necessary to write his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” He wrote to clergy in the South who tried to dissuade him from carrying out

¹³ John Wildermuth. “Many Obama Supporters Also Backed Prop. 8.” San Francisco Chronicle, November 6, 2008, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/11/05/MNH413UTUS.DTL> (accessed March 18, 2009).

nonviolent, direct action.¹⁴ The United Church of Christ joined Dr. King's campaign and used its resources to help keep the Civil Rights movement going.¹⁵

A young, graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and Boston University in Massachusetts, Dr. King was called to pastor Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. A son of the South, he was well acquainted with segregation laws and the harsh penalties for noncompliance. He had no idea his first ministerial assignment would vault him to leadership of the Civil Rights movement.

Working with the president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Mr. E.D. Nixon and the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Dr. King encouraged people to stand by their faith in defense of their rights. Meeting in church halls, basements, and sanctuaries, the civil rights movement was born.¹⁶

Inspired by the courageous act of Rosa Parks, a devout Methodist Church member, seamstress, and local secretary for the NAACP, who refused to give up her seat on a city bus,¹⁷ clergy and lay leaders took up the mantle and forged a movement that went from the sanctuary to the street for a year. They practiced public liturgy that transformed a nation and ignited the world.

The American Civil Rights Movement Influence on International Movements

The Civil Rights movement led by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the United States of America during the 1950's and 60's became a model of resistance

¹⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," The Estate of Martin Luther King, Jr, April 16, 1963, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf> (accessed November 27, 2008).

¹⁵ J. Bennett Guess. "Milestone: 'Pilgrim' and 'Youth' Fellowships Came Together 50 Years Ago." United Church News, August September 2008, <http://www.ucc.org/ucnews/augsep08/milestone-pilgrim-and.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

¹⁶ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

¹⁷ "Rosa Parks," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Parks (accessed November 27, 2008).

that captured the attention and imagination of poor people around the world. Even beyond the scope of its precise focus on African Americans living in the Deep South in 1954, who were terrorized and brutally assaulted because they dared to seek redress for laws that undermined their struggle for citizenship, Dr. King and the Civil Rights movement created a global paradigm for social transformation.

Taiwan, the Philippines, South Africa, the Marshall Islands, and Poland had popular movements that employed the non-violent strategies enunciated by Dr. King to make social and political changes.

On February 28, 1947, thousands of Taiwanese were massacred at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese troops. For 40 years until 1987, people of Taiwan lived under martial law.

As soon as the troops arrived, they started rounding up and executing people, in particular scholars, lawyers, doctors, students and local leaders of the protest movement. In total between 18,000 and 28,000 people were murdered. Thousands of others were arrested and imprisoned in the "White Terror" campaign which took place in the following decade. Many of these remained imprisoned until the early 1980s.¹⁸

During a visit to Tainan Seminary in 1990, I sat with students who participated in an assembly commemorating what they called "2-2-8." The keynote speaker titled his message, "I Have a Vision," and based it on Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech delivered during the March on Washington on August 28, 1963. Out-gunned by the Chinese Nationalist forces, the Taiwanese protested with shouts and songs to bring an end to the domination of China.

¹⁸ "28 February 1947: Taiwan's Holocaust Remembered—60th Commemoration," February 2007, <http://www.taiwandc.org/228-intr.htm> (accessed March 18, 2009).

When, after forty repressive years, the harsh martial law in Taiwan was lifted in 1987, the newly-formed Taiwanese democratic opposition and the courageous Presbyterian Church started to push the Kuomintang authorities to stop covering up the facts, and to come to a full airing of the matter. It wasn't until 1990 that the Kuomintang finally decided albeit reluctantly to open the records.¹⁹

One year later, I was surprised to discover the profound impact and personal attraction the Civil Rights movement in the United States had in Micronesia. For example, while working with high school students on Rung Rung, an atoll in the Marshall Islands that measures one-quarter mile wide and one-half mile long, the walls of classrooms were covered with photographs of black Americans placed under the title, "Our People."²⁰

As I listened to the Marshallese students talk about Black men and women they identified as their heroes and sheroes, they named African American personalities who struggled against racism, segregation, and discrimination. Although they lived more than five thousand miles away from the United States in what appeared to be an isolated string of small islands, the Marshallese students considered among those they called "Our People" were Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, Frederick Douglass, Shirley Chisholm, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

International Models of Public Liturgy and Nonviolent Conflict

This project identifies the use of public liturgy in various settings, including Germany before and during World War II. German theologian/pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer helped to found the Confessing Church by organizing youth and Nazi

¹⁹ <http://www.taiwandc.org/228-intr.htm>

²⁰ Arthur Lawrence Cribbs, Jr, prod., *Making the Connection*, Videotape, New York, NY: United Church Board for World Ministries, 1991.

resisters.²¹ He encouraged them to put their faith into action and stand against Adolph Hitler. Bonhoeffer was influenced and radicalized by his black church experience in Harlem, New York, in the early 1930s.

He attended Abyssinian Baptist Church under the pastoral leadership of the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., while studying at Union Theological Seminary.²² While working with Pastor Powell, Bonhoeffer concluded the plight of Black Americans were not too distant from the earlier treatment of Jews in his own country. He decided to return to Germany for the purpose of integrating his American experience with his native reality.

Catholics in South and Central America joined Father Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian priest, who articulated an interpretation of the Gospel that placed him squarely in solidarity with people living in poverty.²³ In Latin America from 1965 to 1974, 'Liberation Theology' emerged as Catholic and Protestant theologians observed the treatment of peasants who were forced to labor without compensation or adequate access to food that they planted and harvested. 'Liberation Theology' provided an analysis of the gospel that was applicable to the unjust conditions of people around them.

In India, Mahatma Gandhi could be called the 'father of the 20th Century international pacifist movement' because he combined Western religious principles with his own scant embrace of Hinduism to develop Satyagraha, nonviolence resistance through civil disobedience. He led his nation of India in a protracted protest against

²¹ Elihai Braun, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer," Jewish Virtual Library, The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Bonhoeffer.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

²² J. Deotis Roberts, *Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

²³ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

British rule until independence was achieved in 1947.²⁴ He never gave in to violence or acts of injustice.

In every measurable way, Gandhi epitomized public liturgy by using his own life to experiment with sacrifice of self indulgence and the embodiment of truth. He grounded himself in theological, biblical, and religious principles applied to political strategies. His unwavering commitment to nonviolence and holding every life as sacred and divinely ordered elevated his campaign for sovereignty to a standard still sought by both religious and secular social activists. Although Gandhi was rooted in his Hindu heritage, his actions were intended to change the political dependence of his country.

Gandhi's example had a direct impact on Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr., two Christian ministers, who embraced nonviolent resistance inspired by Gandhi's campaigns in India. To the extent Gandhi successfully utilized the Public Square to demonstrate and uphold the principles of honoring human life as sacred and achieve his goals without denigrating or demonizing his foes, marked his work as an example that continues to be relevant for Christian and other religious leaders.

During the 20th Century, on almost every continent, groups of Christians and other religious leaders have organized their constituents to form mass movements to address human injustice. They were especially inspired by black clergy in the United States and South Africa.

In 1991, immediately following Nelson Mandela's release from a South African prison after 27 years, he visited the United States. He and his wife, Winnie, made their way to New York and stopped by the United Church Board for World Ministries where I was employed. They came to the national headquarters of American churches housed at

²⁴ "Mahatma Gandhi," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi (accessed November 27, 2008).

475 Riverside Drive because the churches stood in solidarity with the people of South Africa during those horrible decades of apartheid. They attended worship services at Riverside Church, a congregation of the United Church of Christ and the American Baptist Church, where Mr. Mandela spoke.

In South Africa, Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu helped to design the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in 1995²⁵ as a means to start a healing process after decades of apartheid’s deadly force and violence splintered that nation. For a new South Africa to emerge with a focus on justice and community, an extraordinary condition had to be created. Bishop Tutu was in the vanguard and used his church in Cape Town as the venue to lend credibility to their efforts.

The “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” provided a process and platform for victims and perpetrators to face each other and testify about their participation and complicity in the system of apartheid that separated people according to color, race, or ethnic features. The ruling, minority, white-dominated National Party suppressed the lives of South Africa’s majority population of Blacks, Coloureds, and Indians through its system of apartheid.²⁶

Many black South Africans who fought hard to overthrow apartheid and oust the white Nationalist Party have criticized the ‘Truth and Reconciliation’ process. They contend it did not go far enough to deal with the ravages of injustice. Their complaint is that the decision to seek reconciliation trumped the need for reparation, restoration, and reclamation of tribal lands. Critics argued the absence of full justice cannot lead to reconciliation.²⁷

²⁵ “No. 34 of 1995: Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act,” Office of the President, July 26, 1995, <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/legal/act9534.htm> (accessed November 27, 2008).

²⁶ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Random House, 1999).

²⁷ William Kyle, missionary in South Africa, *Through the Storm*, DVD, prod. Art Cribbs, San Francisco, CA: Granma’s Camera Productions, February 2005.

Northeast of South Africa, across and beyond the Indian Ocean, nestled among the Asian Pacific islands from 1965 until 1986, the people of the Philippines also suffered under the corrupt leadership of their president Ferdinand Marcos. A decorated hero following World War II, President Marcos built an empire that once made his nation the envy of Asia. But, as he rose in power, citizens of the 7,107 islands that make up the Philippines grew poorer until “slightly more than half the population lived below the poverty line.”²⁸

These activities were not just “foreign” affairs in a distant nation. In 1983, Lupita, the sister of Benigno Aquino, had been producer of my television program in San Francisco, and her husband, Ken Kashiwahara, was my colleague at ABC News. Ken had traveled with his brother-in-law, Benigno, when they arrived in the Philippines. Ken was forced to remain on board the airplane when Benigno Aquino was rushed off the aircraft and assassinated.²⁹

Roman Catholic Bishop Jaime Cardinal Sin instructed members of his diocese to begin worshiping in the streets as a visible sign of the church’s stand in solidarity with the people against an undemocratic, political system.³⁰ His parishioners followed him and for five years conducted religious services in the streets of Metro Manila, Cebu City, and throughout the country.

Three years following the 1983 assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino on the tarmac at Manila International Airport,³¹ religious leaders and their

²⁸ “Philippines: Poverty and Welfare,” U.S. Library of Congress, <http://countrystudies.us/philippines/74.htm> (accessed November 27, 2008).

²⁹ Sam Chu Lin, “Veteran Newsman Began His Career in Hawaii,” *Hawaii Herald*, September 4, 1998, <http://fsakamoto.com/sakamoto/ken.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

³⁰ “Obituary: Cardinal Jaime Sin: Cardinal Jaime Sin, Who Has Died at the Age of 76, Was Hugely Revered,” *British Broadcasting Company*, June 21, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4113534.stm> (accessed October 24, 2008).

³¹ “Benigno Aquino Assassinated August 21, 1983,” *CNN Interactive*, <http://www.cnn.com/resources/video.almanac/1983/index.html#aquino> (accessed November 27, 2008).

parishioners advanced the “People Power” movement. They exercised their faith by singing, praying, and standing in defiance of military personnel and armored vehicles. Their tenacity resulted in the overthrow of the Marcos regime in what the international media dubbed, “The bloodless revolution.”³²

In 1986, I went to the Philippines following the People Power revolution as a news reporter to cover the first 100 days of the newly elected presidency of Corazon Aquino, widow of Benigno. I witnessed the mood of the people as a new government took power, and I traveled around the country to glimpse changes that were taking place.

It was the vision of Bishop Sin that gave rise to a national movement that brought social transformation to the Philippines. He used his authority to voice opposition to injustice and galvanized a people to stand together to change their government. His action that called congregations to leave their sanctuary and have church in the streets for five years is a clear and convincing model of public liturgy.

Earlier that decade on August 31, 1980, in Poland, 17,000 workers staged a strike at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk to form that country’s first labor union under communist rule. Led by Lech Walesa, an unemployed electrician, the shipyard workers attracted popular support in 20 regions around the country. It began as a protest against rising food prices and mushroomed into the birth of Solidarity, a trade labor union. But, it became much more than a workers’ strike. 9 million workers joined the union in Poland. Walesa and Solidarity created an international nonviolent movement that eventually crumbled the Soviet bloc in Europe.

In the long, dark period leading up to the radical changes of 1989, Solidarity worked in the underground. But, as Radek Sikorski, a former deputy foreign and defense

³² “From Aquino’s Assassination to People’s Power,” U.S. Library of Congress, <http://countrystudies.us/philippines/29.htm> (accessed November 27, 2008).

minister of post communist Poland, recalled, it never wavered from one its key principles -- nonviolence.

"It was a peaceful movement which actually realized all its objectives and more. So I think the path of nonviolence is certainly an important Solidarity legacy. And if you look at what happened in other countries -- in the Czech Republic, and more recently in Serbia or in Ukraine -- that message has been successfully imitated," Sikorski said.

Solidarity's underground efforts were also greatly aided by financial help from American trade unions, as well as moral support from Pope John Paul II. The pope published a major text -- the encyclical "On Human Work" -- and met with Walesa in 1983 for talks that made international headlines. Both acts, as well as the strategic partnership between the Polish Catholic Church and Solidarity, lent powerful legitimacy to the movement.³³

These international models propelled ordinary human beings into extraordinary chapters of history. They "walked the talk" by framing social justice issues with their faith traditions. Their work affected the lives of people in congregations and communities that had a profound impact on changing social and political realities in nations. In almost every situation a local action became the flame that ignited a raging fire for justice.

The challenge set forth in this project is to encourage Mainline church leaders and pastors, particularly among United Church of Christ congregations, to embrace public liturgy as a means of worship. Bringing public service activities into the sanctuary and taking worship service outside can increase the relevance of the faith community.

³³ Jeffrey Donovan, "Poland: Solidarity—The Trade Union That Changed the World," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, August 24, 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1060898.html> (accessed March 18, 2009).

I have listened to and witnessed resounding disappointment borne by people who expect religious leaders to be on the frontlines, openly struggling for justice and peace. Instead, too many religious leaders still choose to gather inside sanctuaries and 'sacred' settings away from the din of public cries. They need to be encouraged to get more deeply involved in public acts of justice to improve the lives of people who are hurting.

Issues that required mass movements around the world to change social conditions in the past century continue to affect people today. Unfortunately, overtly religious groups contributed to and participated in systems of social and economic problems such as war, colonialism, and exploitation of the poor to advance the building of empires.

Injustice and maltreatment of oppressed peoples linger still although most of the world identifies with some faith tradition. Standing in Public Square and giving voice to issues that affect the lives of the most vulnerable members of society is consistent with the highest ideals of Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity.

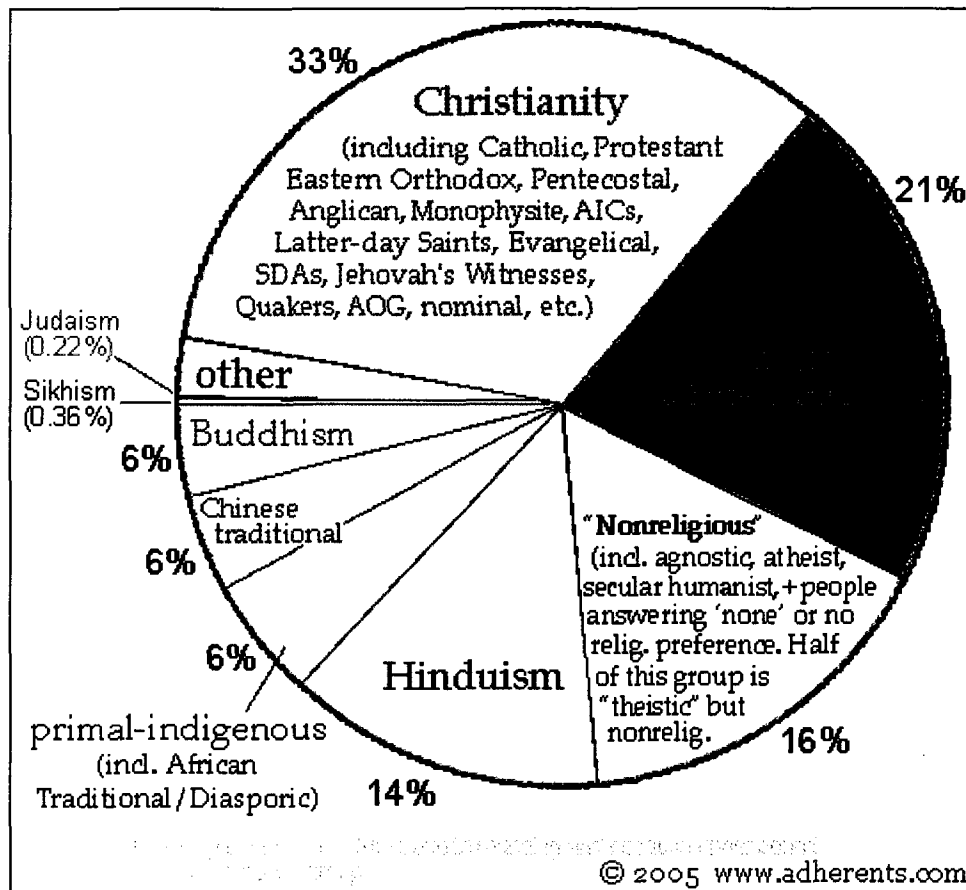


Figure 1.1 Major world religions as individuals identify their faith traditions

This project will design three events in the context of a local United Church of Christ congregation situated in San Marino, California, an affluent suburb of Los Angeles, where residents are not accustomed to publicly engage their faith in social justice actions. Historically, the ethos has been to retain a separation between religious worship and life experiences. Comfortable lifestyles within high security neighborhoods create barriers between wealthy homeowners and transient or transitory persons who travel through San Marino as well as people who live in communities that border the city limits. By identifying and addressing issues that directly affect parishioners of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ; this project will develop strategies to motivate members of the church to focus outwardly and act publicly for justice.

Leaning on lessons learned from eight years experience as an urban church pastor in San Diego, California,³⁴ this project will encourage people to move from reluctance about participating in public liturgy to organizing activities that bring social concerns into sacred space. This is an initial step to prepare the congregation to shift from the sanctuary to the streets. When people become aware of their own concerns and can articulate their discomfort, they are ready to take public action within the context of their faith traditions.

Thesis

This project examines the histories and patterns of public engagement within two United Church of Christ congregations in San Diego and San Marino, California, and constructs a series of encounters which were designed to cultivate and articulate concerns for justice; to demonstrate compassion and solidarity with others through spiritual, meditative, and restorative practices that constitute public liturgy.

Definition of Major Terms

Classical definitions of the term, 'liturgy', include the Sacrament of Communion or commemorating the Last Supper in which bread and wine are consecrated and served to people, the public. Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary states, "A public service, the public service of God, public worship; belonging to the people, public...In the Roman Catholic Church it includes all forms and services in any language, in any part o the world, for the celebration of Mass."

For the purpose of this project, *public liturgy* pertains to intentional religious presence based on spiritual, meditative, and restorative practices that serve to cultivate and articulate a concern for justice, and demonstrate compassion and solidarity with others, including acts of apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Public liturgy

³⁴ See Appendix 21.

transforms secular and sacred spaces into venues where faithful acts of witnessing to God's love for all people and God's intervention in human activities can occur. Public liturgy provides a platform where anyone is inspired to 'pray out loud' in an intentional way that serves to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."³⁵

For the sake of clarification and specification, it is necessary also to state what is not meant by the term, *public liturgy*. It does not apply to every outdoor religious gathering such as, 'tent revivals,' 'crusades' or other evangelistic campaigns made popular by televangelists. It does not include all acts of public prayer, such as, the Pope praying at the Vatican for people around the world or prayer at a school's football game. It does not include religious art or symbols, such as, the display of the Ten Commandments inside courtrooms.

Work Previously Done in the Field

Robin Darling Young, theologian and professor of History of Christianity, examines the persecution and death of early Christians as acts of public liturgy in her book, *In Procession Before the World: Martyrdom as Public Liturgy in Early Christianity*. Her writings draw attention to the courage and intentionality among the faith's forbearers who offered themselves as "living sacrifices" for Christ. Ultimately, they joined the "great cloud of witnesses" referred to in the book of Hebrews, who died for the cause of faith, justice, righteousness, and the advancement of the 'Kingdom of God'.

Young's work reminds us of Bonhoeffer's admonition that when Christ calls us, "he beckons us to come and die." This disturbing interpretation of discipleship cuts to

³⁵ "Finley Peter Dunne," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finley_Peter_Dunne (accessed November 28, 2008).

the heart of ministry that confronts authorities and “speaks truth to power” at the risk of losing one’s life. Overcoming fear is crucial to doing justice ministry.

The Reverend Dr. Cleo Malone, the late executive director of the Palava Tree, an alcohol, tobacco and drug treatment program in San Diego, California, said, “You can’t be safe and save people at the same time.”

Young points her readers to the ‘ultimate sacrifice’ made by followers of Jesus Christ who did not wither under the threat of death. In fact, they openly became vulnerable to threats of persecution and death by publicly proclaiming their faith. They gave their lives to The Way as public witnesses that God’s unfailing love for humanity was demonstrated through Jesus. Young contends such courage was an of public liturgy and a model of how Christians should outwardly display their faith without regard to political or social consequences.

For the past two years, the Institute of Liturgical Studies at Valparaiso University in Indiana has focused its attention on public liturgy. In 2008 for its Sixtieth Anniversary, the theme was “Liturgy in the Public Square.” The event concentrated on church worship and public life. It looked at “ways of developing relationships between Eucharistic life and political life, between public and private moral deliberations, through grounding in the church’s liturgy.”³⁶

Local congregations are equipped to deliver a message of hope in difficult times to people living in crisis. The Eucharist embodies God’s unfailing love and is accessible to everyone when administered where people are gathered inside and outside the walls of the church.

³⁶ “Liturgy in the Public Square,” Institute of Liturgical Studies, Valparaiso, IN: Valparaiso University, March 31-April 2, 2008, <http://wwwstage.valpo.edu/ils> (accessed March 18, 2009).

Theologian and pacifist Walter Wink provides insight into nonviolent strategies as a way of living the Gospel of Jesus. In his “power trilogy,” he challenges his readers to confront forces within each of us to understand the cosmic, institutional and personal powers that lead us into ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ actions.

The third and short version of the trilogy, *The Powers That Be*, pushes readers to rethink Jesus’ relationships with people who lived on the margins of society. Wink writes, “Table fellowship with sinners was a central feature of Jesus’ ministry.” He quotes New Testament scholar Marcus Borg’s assessment of those sinners as people who “had been placed, or had placed themselves outside the holiness code of Israel as it was being interpreted by certain circles in first-century Palestine.” Wink believes such persons were accepted by Jesus as included ‘in the realm of God’ which meant rejecting religious codes that fostered distinction and separation of the ‘pure’ and ‘holy’ “from the uncleanness of the world.”³⁷

In his book, *Put Down Your Sword: Answering the Gospel Call to Creative Nonviolence*,” John Dear recounts stories of his encounters with social justice activists, including Father Daniel Berrigan, who participated in public liturgy events to demonstrate ways of being nonviolent. Dear writes about celebrating “Easter in a New York park with a few Jesuit friends...who held a small liturgy and had a picnic.”³⁸

During their picnic, Dear says the group reflected on the Gospel and the Resurrection of Jesus. He writes, “Resurrection brings more than new clothes or Easter baskets. It means peace is stronger than war, justice stronger than injustice, compassion

³⁷ Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 73-74.

³⁸ John Dear, *Put Down Your Sword: Answering the Gospel Call to Creative Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 17.

stronger than contempt. Resurrection means forgiveness surpasses resentment and reconciliation surpasses revenge.”³⁹

Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa has written extensively about ‘forgiveness’ and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In his book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Tutu reflects on testimonies given by victims, survivors of brutal conduct, and perpetrators of violence during the long years of apartheid in his country. Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, Indians, Jews, and persons who participated in the struggle to end the cruel bureaucracy that created to separate races faced each in front of the commission.

He described the wails of women whose sons, husbands, and brothers had been beaten, killed, or disappeared. At the same time, security and police officers told how they used deadly force to maintain the national system to keep races apart.⁴⁰

Michael Battle, former professor of theology at Duke Divinity School and, currently, the rector at The Church of our Savior Episcopal Church in San Gabriel, California, spent a year working with Bishop Tutu. He has written the book, *Ubuntu*, the Zulu philosophy of community and humanity: “I am because you are.”⁴¹ This understanding of community and identity informs the importance of creating opportunities for public liturgy to allow the expression of common cause to emerge.

Dr. Cain Hope Felder of Howard University Divinity School provides depth and insight into the role of the Black Church in integrating religion with social justice action.⁴² Dr. Felder’s integration of Biblical warrants and cultural identity provides a foundation upon which local churches can take action based on their interpretation of

³⁹ Dear, 17-18.

⁴⁰ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Random House, 1999), 150-157.

⁴¹ Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 79-80.

⁴² Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

Jesus' teachings, including his emphasis on caring for the welfare of neighbors and strangers as a mandate.

The Reverend Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, former executive director of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, was an adamant advocate for public liturgy. He helped organize the 1995 "Million Man March" in Washington, DC.⁴³ He left the UCC in 1998, joined Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, and changed his name to Minister Benjamin Chavis Muhammad,⁴⁴ but he unsuccessfully explored ways of working with both the UCC and the Nation of Islam in urban areas.

Dr. C. Eric Lincoln chronicled the so-called "Black Muslim" movement under the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, formerly known as Elijah Poole, founder of the Nation of Islam.⁴⁵ The Honorable Elijah Muhammad gained respect beyond his followers, primarily through the oratorical gifts of Malcolm X, a convert to the Nation of Islam while serving time in prison.⁴⁶ Malcolm X had an influence on African American Christians who pressured their pastors to take a more active role through their churches in organizing social, cultural, and economic opportunities that were patterned after the Black Muslims.

Henry H. Mitchell⁴⁷ and J. Alfred Smith⁴⁸ have documented the influence black preaching has had on inspiring congregations to act and often lead their pastors out of

⁴³ "Million Man March," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Million_Man_March (accessed November 28, 2008).

⁴⁴ "Dr. Benjamin Chavis Muhammad: Civil Rights Warrior and Spiritual Advisor for the Hip Hop Nation," The Truth Establishment Institute Speakers' Bureau, http://www.truthinstitute.org/bios/Benjamin_Muhammad.htm (accessed November 28, 2008).

⁴⁵ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Duke University Press, 1990).

⁴⁶ Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley* (New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1964).

⁴⁷ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970).

⁴⁸ J. Alfred Smith and Harry Louis Williams, *On the Jericho Road: A Memoir of Racial Justice, Social Action, and Prophetic Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2004).

their pulpits and sanctuaries into the streets. Even in a predominantly white congregation there is a place for black preaching that speaks directly to concerns of the people.

James Melvin Washington⁴⁹ and Taylor Branch⁵⁰ studied the ministry of Martin Luther King, Jr. and, respectively, edited his speeches, letters, and books as well as traced his nonviolent strategies in the Civil Rights movement. They demonstrated how Dr. King understood the important role public liturgy played in forging social justice during an era of hostility, hatred, and social unrest.

Professor James Cone⁵¹ of Union Theological Seminary in New York has done scholarly work on Black Liberation Theology in which he focused on religion and the Black church's articulation of deep pain among African Americans. His scholarship documents the grounding from which the Civil Rights movement emerged.

Dr. Cone is responsible for setting my course in this area of study as he directed me to approach ministry with a combination of media and ministry as agents for social and political transformation. He directed me to the gravesite of Malcolm X in White Plains, New York, where I spent a Sunday afternoon reflecting on his life and powerful voice that eloquently enunciated the battered realities of urban Black America before he was assassinated on February 22, 1965.

Gustavo Gutierrez,⁵² the 'father of Liberation Theology', provides an international lens into Latin American Catholic churches' foray into public liturgy by building a justice movement based on the teachings of Jesus Christ while challenging the political-social-economic systems that stratified peoples according on their access to land

⁴⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986).

⁵⁰ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

⁵¹ James H. Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or A Nightmare* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991).

⁵² Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973).

and food. Gutierrez and other clergy developed a process of “See, Judge, Act” that has been used around the world by faith-based organizations to analyze the context of their public ministries and for act in solidarity with people who live on the margins and social edges.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer⁵³ helped to develop the ‘Confessing Church’ in Nazi Germany as an alternative to mainline churches that acquiesced rather than opposed Adolph Hitler’s regime. His use of radio and youth ministries resulted in public liturgy that exposed a separation of state ordained churches from a radical, non-compliant religious movement.

The works cited in this section reflect theological reflections as well as practice that provide insights into the various aspects of public liturgy. The elements of public liturgy include being present in the lives of persons most directly affected by policies and practices that reduce their abilities to earn livelihoods or participate in the privileges of citizenship; listening attentively to stories and experiences of people whose lives have been uprooted or negatively affected by social conditions; acknowledging relationships between those who suffer the greatest impact and persons who benefit from the labor of others; participating in an open forum with prayer, music, and testimonies of personal experiences and possible conversion are shared.

The purpose of this project is to use contemporary issues in the service area of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ in San Marino, California, to encourage it members to participate in public liturgy opportunities. Further, the congregation will be urged to harness it resources to address the needs of persons and families by performing public liturgy inside and outside the church sanctuary. My goal is to broaden an understanding of worship by identifying relevant and doable activities.

⁵³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: 1959, first published in 1937).

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project demonstrates the power of public liturgy by inviting members of the local church where I serve as pastor to stretch their imagination and extend their understanding of worship. We integrated contemporary social and economic issues into our teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Three significant events were organized within the context of our predominately affluent, white, suburban United Church of Christ congregation.⁵⁴

The events were designed to reflect how liturgy that takes place inside our sanctuary can encourage people of faith who are inward thinking and self focused in worship, could go outside the walls of the church and replicate their religious experiences in the public square. Acknowledging the difficulty of moving congregations beyond their comfort zones, this project used organizational techniques that allowed members of the church to be part of creating opportunities that addressed issues pertaining to their primary needs and worries, including the economic crisis that threatened homeowners, investors, and workers whose jobs were at risk.

As pastor, I assisted the congregation in organizing the three events in August, September, and October 2008 that helped our members create a transparent, bi-transactional approach to public liturgy which allowed information, testimonies, and experiences to flow in, out, and between the sanctuary and the public sphere as a witness in solidarity with persons affected by the current economic downturn. Concerns about racism, stress over local, national and global economies, and commitments to perform public service provided opportunities for members of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ to become involved in public liturgy. In the post-9/11 era when many

⁵⁴ See Appendix 19

Americans are highly sensitive about security, the congregation designated the second Sunday in September as “Public Safety Sunday.”

Since I also had been pastor of an urban, predominantly African American congregation in San Diego, California, this project reflects efforts to move those two different and divergent congregations out of the sanctuary and into the streets.

Both UCC congregations did not readily embrace the concept of public liturgy. Yet, there were lay members who had a direct impact on my ministry which challenged and pushed me beyond my comfort zone. As a long time news reporter, I was well practiced at observing and recording public events without being involved, taking sides, or having an opinion about them.

Entering pastoral ministry, I brought the perspective of distance, dispassion, and objectivity with me. However, once people began to trust me with the stories of their lives in a more intimate way and I did not leave them to cover other stories without any intention to return, my sensitivity heightened and my presence with them was sealed. Instead of being ‘objective’ like a journalist, I found the circumstances of their lives and the conditions under which they survived were very often objectionable. Worse, I discover the church as an institution was just as distant as any stranger passing on the street. It was a conundrum. How could a congregation invite people to be part of the Body of Christ and at the same time dismiss, ignore, or easily accept unjust situations that left people suffering, hurting, and grieving? I continue to ask that question in the background of this project.

The field is narrowed considerably as it specifically addresses conducting religious worship services for the purpose of standing in solidarity with people who are forced to struggle with change.

Procedure for Integration

This project employs library research in the fields of ethics, theology, and urban ministry to examine the principles of nonviolent strategies based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Desmond Tutu for the purpose of applying them to a United Church of Christ congregation in San Marino, California.

Identifying international examples of public liturgy and non-violent strategies from the 20th Century, this project demonstrates the relevance, power, and influence a local congregation possesses to create a public presence. Although the models presented in this project grew into global movements, each one began by individual or local group that dealt with problems affecting local communities. What was often discovered or determined was the broad similarity of issues that touched lives across nations and international borders. Whenever that occurs, an ideal opportunity is presented to form solidarity with others who share common concerns.

In August 2008, San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ hosted a forum on “race, racism and religion in America.” A panel of clergy and medical doctors discussed the video, *Another God*, which deals with the abuse of religion by condoning or excusing racism in the United States.

The second event, “Public Safety Sunday,” occurred September 14, 2008, and honored law enforcement personnel and firefighters who dedicate their lives to the protection of communities, people and property in West San Gabriel Valley. Police and fire chiefs shared their experiences as a source of motivating civilians to make selfless decisions about their lives and careers.

In the midst of an accelerated economic collapse on Wall Street, the congregation held its third event, a public forum on October 16, 2008, that dealt with the national

economy and its local impact. The forum was titled, “*What is Happening to Our Money, Homes, and Pensions? Don’t Panic. Be Informed!*” The panel was comprised of financial professionals, realtors, and a psychologist who addressed the angst among homeowners, workers and elders worried about their futures.

Each event was publicized broadly through media with the hired assistance of Clive Hoffman and Associates, a professional public relations firm in Beverly Hills, California. Newspaper articles were published and television news teams reported the activities in the Greater Los Angeles Area. Written and verbal comments by participants were collected to provide a source of evaluating how participants, especially members of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, responded to acts of public liturgy.

In conjunction with social justice actions in San Diego by members of Christian Fellowship Congregational United Church of Christ, accounts of personal involvement in solidarity with individuals and families who suffer discrimination, alienation, and humiliation are also documented. My observations and participation in public liturgical events in Los Angeles, San Marino, and San Diego, California, as a local UCC pastor, president of the San Diego County Ecumenical Council, and president of Pacific Media Ministries, are included to illustrate how pastors and congregations can conduct public liturgy by shifting from the sanctuary into the streets.

Thesis Outline

Chapter Two, “*Public Liturgy and the Power of Prayer*,” examines prayer as the central element of public liturgy. Knowing when, where and why we pray give focus to this aspect of worship. Prayer is a conversation with God in which we petition our needs and seek mercy for our mistakes. It is also a time to listen and reflect on what a ‘Still Speaking God’ is saying to us. Two sermons and a television interview are included in

this section to demonstrate how the use of public prayer in local and international settings can help put our faith into action.

Chapter Three, “*Public Liturgy Affirms Redemptive Suffering: A Biblical and Theological Reflection.*” This chapter examines what I refer to as “God’s Infinite Imagination,” which includes God’s preferential option for the poor that is experienced through Jesus as the “suffering servant and Savior.” The incomprehensible creativity exercised by God conceives and provides extraordinary events in which God intervenes in human affairs. It is the contrasting force to what I describe as “extreme egotism,” a human condition that vainly, falsely, and unfortunately leads to an inflated assessment of human power to construct and control institutions, bureaucracies, structures, and systems that dominate others and promote the advancement of empires. Divine redemption and systems of mass destruction interchange in contemporary and biblical scenarios.

Chapter Four takes its title from a quote of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “*Nonviolence or Non-Existence.*” This chapter provides a study of 20th Century disciplines of nonviolent strategies used as public liturgy to create opportunities to inspire congregations to work for social change. It gives a reflection on the philosophy and activism of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King said it best, “The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.”

Although they cannot be replicated exactly because effective strategies are based on context, there are models of nonviolent commitment worth considering for application in local settings of the church in the United States.

Chapter Five, “*The Project,*” describes each element of the three events conducted in 2008 that comprise this project. Evaluations are included along with written responses by participants. Those events were designed to galvanize San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ in San Marino, California, and connect its members with other

people in surrounding communities in an affluent suburb of Los Angeles. Getting Christians out of the sanctuary and into the streets is consistent with the Great Commission “to go into the world, baptizing and making disciples.”

Finally, this project helped me to realize the role of pastor is not solely focused on leadership. Leadership emerges from the center as well as the margins. It can come from quiet pew-sitters who squeeze the pastor’s hand after a meaningful worship experience. Individuals and strategic blocs within a congregation can lead a local church toward greater participation in public acts for justice. One of the reasons it is difficult for congregations to move outside the sanctuary is because of the familiarity and comfort provided there. There is an assumption that ‘going to church’ means ‘leaving the world outside’. Disruption of that idea can disturb a person’s sense of worship. Further, when Christians become used to being in a place that centers their souls and soothe them without challenging or prodding them to become entangled in the gritty, dangerous situation of others, there is an interruption that leads to discomfort. This project recognizes an established way in which a local congregation has dealt with issues of human sexuality and completing a process that resulted in opening itself to receive gays and lesbians. It also extended itself to calling its first African American pastor.

Now, it is being urged to step beyond its sanctuary and experience the wider worship of public liturgy. Although this project offers only the initial platform, it suggests a forward thrust toward exploring new ways to have people who have been protected daily contact with a more diverse population to imagine their connections; even to form solidarity with persons in cultures and nations quite different than San Marino.

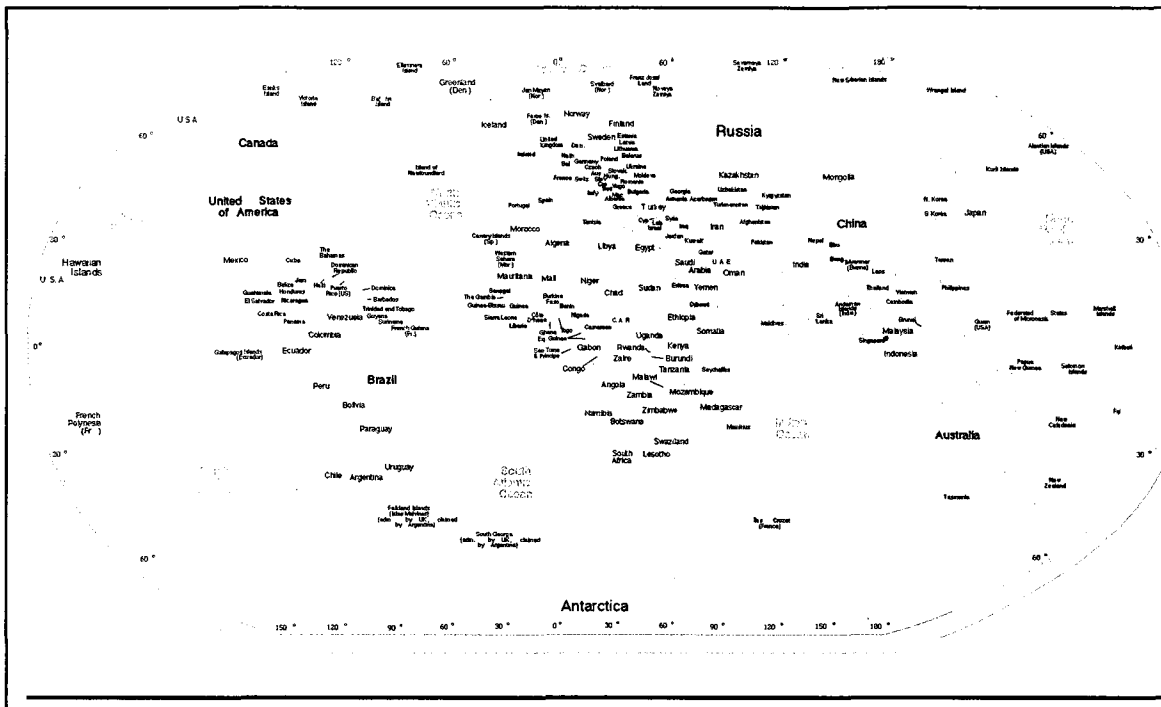


Figure 1.2 Lateral view of the world where people of faith have forged social, economic, and political transformation through religious presence and public liturgy. 1. Civil Rights Movement in the USA; 2. Liberation Theology; 3. Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa; 4. People Power Movement in the Philippines; 5. Confessing Church during Nazi Germany; 6. Gandhi's nonviolence campaign in India.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ <http://world-map.nl/>

CHAPTER 2

Public Liturgy and The Power of Prayer

*To some who were confident of their own righteousness
And looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:
“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee
And the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed
About himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men ---
Robbers, evildoers, adulterers---or even like this tax collector.
I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’
“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even
Look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said,
‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’
“I tell you that this man, rather than the other,
Went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts
Himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself
Will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14 NIV)*

Moving a congregation of comfortable, affluent Christians in the United States out of their sanctuary and into the open street does not happen simply because it's "a good idea" or "the right thing to do." Not even bringing to their attention the power and purpose of taking action that is in their best self-interest will guarantee their participation in public liturgy: praying in the Public Square for economic, political, or social transformation. There is a great resistance to demonstrating one's religious practices in public, including prayer.

Lest we forget, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did not gain the full support of his National Baptist Convention USA denomination as he led the nation toward breaking down racial barriers. The Reverend Joseph H. Jackson, president of the National Baptist Convention opposed Dr. King and the Civil Rights movement.

In a radio interview in 1988 commemorating twentieth anniversary of Dr. King's assassination, Rev. Jackson's hatred of Dr. King had not subsided as he remarked angrily, "Don't talk to me about that damn Nigger."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Joseph H. Jackson, Sunday Morning Live, prod. Art Cribbs, WBMX-FM, Chicago, April 3, 1988.

Rev. Jackson's antipathy toward Dr. King dated back to 1957 when a group of ministers challenged Rev. Jackson's leadership. Among his opponents were Dr. King and his father, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr. They contested Rev. Jackson's decision to overturn his own rule to limit the presidency of the National Baptist Convention to four terms. However, when his tenure expired, Rev. Jackson sought a fifth term and won re-election. The fight for control of the Convention went on for several years. Dr. King's contingent challenged Rev. Jackson in the courts, but Rev. Jackson prevailed.

The dispute turned deadly at an annual meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, where the "Rev. A. G. Wright of Detroit fell four feet from the stage to the auditorium floor, suffering a fatal concussion."⁵⁷

Unable to successfully wrestle the Convention out of the hands of Rev. J. H. Jackson, both Kings led nearly a half million of its members out of the Convention and formed the *Progressive National Baptist Convention* in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1961.⁵⁸

The struggles Dr. King faced within the National Baptist Convention are replicated throughout the Christian faith without regard to race or income. Black and white, rich and poor, urban and suburban; there are some members in congregations who share Rev. Jackson's sentiment.

"The most important thing now," he says, "is to save the nation, in order to save the individual citizen, and the race." Probably few blacks, however, share his opinion that the civil rights struggle is disruptive of that unity. "It was supposed to be a struggle for first-class citizenship, not for getting Whitey," Jackson maintains. "Those who wanted

⁵⁷ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters* (New York: Touchstone Books/Simon & Schuster: 1988), 502.

⁵⁸ "Joseph H. Jackson: 'The Meaning of the Cross'." *Time*, April 6, 1970, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,943985,00.html> (accessed February 3, 2009).

their rights are being sold another bill of goods now. There are Negroes who believe their mission is to destroy America." ⁵⁹

If not articulated with such clarity, strong resistance to civil disobedience permeates mainline denominations in the United States, including the United Church of Christ and congregations I have served in San Diego and San Marino, California. Thus, it was necessary to employ less threatening strategies to shift congregants from their seats in the pews to the sidewalks outside the church doors.

The City of San Marino is an upper-income, bedroom community situated eleven miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles. Its history of housing some of California's oldest and wealthiest families includes a well-honed tradition of keeping personal matters private. The construction of homes with high walls, fences, gates and shrubbery is intended to ward off outsiders while it restricts communication between neighbors. It signals a sacred code of low tolerance for public display of any activity that imposes "undesirable" elements on residents.

The city prohibits door-to-door solicitation or distribution of flyers at residences or businesses. There have been no protests or public acts of civil disobedience in the city limits. Although the city code bans such activity, there is an exemption for religious and political organizations. Preachers and politicians can go house-to-house to pitch their claims, but Girl Scouts can't sell their cookies up and down the street.

In preparation for a special event at the church, the congregation was asked to walk the neighborhoods and place door hangers announcing the event at houses surrounding the church. Long-term San Marino residents within the congregation balked at the request and explained in detail why we shouldn't do it. Others thought it was a

⁵⁹ "Joseph H. Jackson: 'The Meaning of the Cross'."

good idea and would encourage some members to step outside and get to know the community better.

We planned a special “Blessing of the Pets Sunday,” in which owners were welcomed to bring their pets for prayers and the Sacrament of Baptism. During the Sunday worship service one week before the pet blessings, instead of a sermon, the congregation was invited to leave the sanctuary and spread the word about the event. More than half walked out with door hangers in hand along with street assignments and took the message throughout the surrounding neighborhood.

For those persons who chose to remain in church, they endured a homily about the Great Commission and Jesus’ instruction to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁰

The exercise was intended to urge the congregation to slip out of their comfortable pews and create a sermon with their feet in the streets. As those who had left began to return, they carried with them energy of excitement and laughter.

They had accomplished at least two things: they discovered it was fun to meet people along the sidewalks who had pets, and they got some exercise. More importantly, they surprised some of our neighbors when they explained the “church cared about their pets and wanted to pray for them.”

Why do we pray? When and where do we pray? What do we expect from praying? For many observers, prayer is an act that follows hopelessness. It happens after all other possibilities have failed. It is the last resort when medical practitioners say there is nothing else they can do for a terminally ill patient. People pray amid disasters when they are afraid and have no place to turn. But prayer is more than a summons. It is the link to Truth and Reality: to God.

⁶⁰ Matthew 28:19 NIV.

Prayer focuses and prioritizes our lives. It is the source of power that centers us sufficiently to make sense of the world. It is a conversation with God where God speaks and we listen; we speak and God listens. Prayer is a discipline that provides a regimen to nurture the human soul. It is an exercise in which corporate worship is achieved and community is formed. Even praying for a pet is heard by the owner and can change attitudes about religion and church.

It becomes public liturgy, an act of service, when prayer for a pet and its owner takes place in the church parking that has been transformed into an “open air” sanctuary and the Sacrament of Baptism is performed by children. Looking into the faces of grateful pet owners and watching tears crawl down their cheeks as the tender voices of children pray over their animal is a precious, sacred moment. It re-defines worship. I observed a noticeable expression of surprise and gratitude on the faces of pet owners as their companions were blessed.

The act of corporate prayer outside the sanctuary is the focus of this examination. When people of faith pray openly together they gain possession of power that attracts public attention. This act of public liturgy is not about praying only for their personal desires. They come together to invoke the Names of God for the purpose of addressing issues of social justice.

Thus, public prayer becomes a strategy to witness and articulate critical concerns about issues affecting society, including human dignity and the environment. As people petition God with their suffering outcry authentic moments turn worship into transformative expressions of solidarity with others separated by time and place.⁶¹

The point is that personal testimony and story form the basis of public liturgy. That becomes the context from which the power of public liturgy is derived. It shapes

⁶¹ See Appendix 1.

the purpose for moving faith communities from inside the doors of the church outside as witnesses in solidarity with people whose voices are not easily heard.

History is replete with examples of how effective connections across national, cultural, and political divides have transformed realities.⁶²

When faith groups, including the United Church of Christ, participated in significant social movements that incorporated models of worship in public space they went on to challenge and change cultural traditions and political conditions in several countries, including the United States, the Philippines, South Africa, and Germany in the 20th Century.

Based on classical understandings of the purpose of the Church as the body of Christ, Christian leaders led people of faith around the world in applying nonviolent strategies to achieve goals of addressing and eradicating unjust treatment of citizens. The impact of presenting God's love through Jesus Christ as a contemporary witness in social settings, served to strengthen the Church's relevance by providing a vision of a New Jerusalem. Human beings' dependence on God is pronounced in a relationship that recognizes God's willingness to continually intervene in human history.

"The union between God and his (sic) people does not, therefore, depend on natural necessity, but on the free historical activity of God in the history of his people. Israel interpreted everything in terms of God's free choice, his mercy, love and faithfulness. God acts, in the very dawn of history, by choosing the forefathers of the nation and giving them his promises. He acts by freeing the tribes from Egyptian slavery, an action which binds together Israel as a nation for the first time, and by making the

⁶² See Appendix 2.

covenant and giving them the law at Sinai, an action which establishes them as the people of the covenant.”⁶³

Moving worship from the safe walls of the sanctuary into the uncertain, but often dangerous terrain of the streets has been a critical and successful means to push the Church outward and make it more visible. It demonstrates God’s love for humankind. Jesus informed his followers that ministry is rooted in love. The greatest commandment is to love God and your neighbor.⁶⁴ Therefore, for the Church to have relevance, it must express love in all aspects of its presence in society. The very basis of the purpose of the Church is the embodiment of love.

An argument can be made that the problems of the world are rooted in the absence of love. The Church provides an alternative to values that diminish human capacity to love as it projects God’s original intention for people to be fully bound by love:

“For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous. Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them.

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.”⁶⁵

“The problem of man (sic) is how to love the One on whom he (sic) is completely, absolutely dependent; who is the Mystery behind the mystery of human existence in the fatefulness of its selfhood, of being this man among these men, in this

⁶³ Hans Kung, *The Church*, (New York: Image Books, 1976), 156.

⁶⁴ Matthew 22:37-40 NRSV.

⁶⁵ 1 John 3:11-15; 4:7-12 NRSV.

time and all time, in the thus and so-ness of the strange actual world. It is the problem of reconciliation to the One from whom death proceeds as well as life, who makes demands too hard to bear, who sets us in the world where our beloved neighbors are the objects of seeming animosity, who appears as God of wrath as well as God of love. It is the problem that arises in its acutest form when life itself becomes a problem, when the goodness of existence is questionable, as it has been for most men at most times; when the ancient and universal suspicion arises that he is happiest who was never born and he next fortunate who died young.”⁶⁶

When my life as a minister began at the very early age of 13 years old, my father, a pastor in the National Baptist Church, instructed me, “If you are to pastor, one thing is required of you: love the people.” That has been the most important wisdom passed on to me. Loving the people erases a multitude of sins. It means being present when families are facing a crisis, showing up in court to stand with a young defendant or sitting in the courtroom close to a parent. My father’s advice has proven true so many times; even when the telephone rings at two o’clock in the morning and the person on the other end is choked with tears.

“Love the people” has not always meant one-on-one. Often it is having the ability to make time when it is inconvenient to attend a rally, protest, and demonstration for a cause that merits ecclesiastical representation.

More than once, I have heard social activists complain about the absence of people of faith during critical moments of social engagement. “Where are church people?” they asked with cynical sneers. Much like the man on the side of the road after

⁶⁶ Richard H. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry* (New York: Harper 1956), 36-37.

being beaten and left for dead, religious leaders walk across the street or pass by without offering a word of comfort to today's people who are pining for help.

*"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"*⁶⁷

Public prayer as liturgy offers a bridge to cultivate and enhance relationships among humankind as it reduces tensions that too often, unnecessarily, lead to war and violence. Prayer is a meaningful, nonviolent approach to obstacles that cause broken communication and escalates emotions to a pitch of breathing fire and murder. God desires a more civil, helpful resolution to divisions.

Christians are exhorted to be aware of the dangers in life but not to turn toward fear and evil. The Church must respond to the cries and concerns of those who suffer with a spirit of reconciliation and not foster a sense of revenge:

*"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer."*⁶⁸

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, stated, "We are to reveal, like the Jewish people, that the God whose authority the king holds is a God of justice, impartial, universal, and a God who is free to forgive offences. But we are also to show who God is by the words our king tells us to address to God.

⁶⁷ Luke 10:30-37 NRSV.

⁶⁸ Romans 12:9-12 NRSV.

In Greek, the definition of liturgy (*leitourgeia*) first meant work for the sake of the public good, before it came to mean the public service of God. Christian identity is 'liturgical' in both senses, the work of a people, a community, showing God to each other and to the world around them, in daily action and in worship.⁶⁹

The Church in Public Square provides an opportunity to mobilize segments of societies to accomplish social justice goals. More importantly, whenever the Church is visible it becomes a viable witness to God's love for the world. Jesus said, "A person who saves his/her life will lose it, but anyone who loses his/her life for Christ's sake will find it.

When the Church loses itself in the streets it finds new life in the persons who are touched and repent (*metanoia*). Part of the church's role is to inspire individuals and large groups of people to step beyond familiar turf and enter the uncertain stage of bold, courageous presence.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Rowan Williams, "Christian Identity and Religious Plurality," lecture, 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 17, 2006.

⁷⁰ See Appendix 3.

CHAPTER 3

Nonviolence or Non-Existence

*"He will judge between the nations
And will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares
And their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
Nor will they train for war anymore."
(Isaiah 2:4)*

Selma to Montgomery

The 20th Century ushered in a host of venues where public liturgy was used to transform nations, including the United States of America. One example was demonstrated in the work of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who mobilized African American Christians in Montgomery, Alabama, in a 380-day boycott of public buses. That action was the genesis of what became known as the Civil Rights Movement.

Rabbi Abraham Herschel coined the phrase, "Praying with their feet," as he joined Martin Luther King, Jr. in the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965.



Figure 3.1 Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel (2nd from right), M.L. King (4th from right) in Selma to Montgomery March, 1965. Photo: Dartmouth⁷¹

⁷¹ Susannah Heschel, "Praying with their Feet: Remembering Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King." PeaceWork 371, December 2006-January 2007, [http:// www.peacework magazine. org /praying-their-feet-remembering-abraham-joshua-heschel-and-martin-luther-king](http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org/praying-their-feet-remembering-abraham-joshua-heschel-and-martin-luther-king) (accessed November 27, 2008).

Bloody confrontations with Alabama state troopers pushed the Civil Rights Movement into the international spotlight. While crossing the Pettis Bridge in Selma, the police stormed marchers and displayed a ferocious assault that was captured on worldwide television.

On Sunday, March 7, 1965, about six hundred people began a fifty-four mile march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery. They were demonstrating for African American voting rights and to commemorate the death of Jimmie Lee Jackson, shot three weeks earlier by a state trooper while trying to protect his mother at a civil rights demonstration.

On the outskirts of Selma, after they crossed the Edmund Pettis Bridge, the marchers, in plain sight of photographers and journalists, were brutally assaulted by heavily armed state troopers and deputies.⁷²



Figure 3.2 Alabama Police Attack Selma-to-Montgomery Marchers FBI Photograph, March 7, 1965

That bloody episode in the nation's rigid South became the catalyst which galvanized peoples of faith organizations from every sector of the country and around the world. Selma, Alabama, was 'Ground Zero' for nonviolent, public liturgy in the United States of America as it attracted young students, clergy, housewives, and people across

⁷² Library of Congress, "American Memory: Today in History, March 7," <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/today/mar07.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

racial and social lines to the cause of civil rights. They left the safe environs of their schools, churches, homes, and jobs to march in the dangerous streets of the Deep South. The news media trained their cameras on the brewing battle between determined segregationists and defiant civil rights workers and advocates.

“I saw what was taking place in Alabama and I resolved to get involved,” said the Reverend Lyle Weible, a retired ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ. “My wife, Sharon, and I were really very young then. We had our first baby still in our arms. I had my first pastorate in New Hampshire.

“I went to the chairman of the trustee board to get a week’s advance on my check. I didn’t have enough money to buy a ticket to go down to Selma,” Weible explained.

“He told me, ‘No! You have no business going down there. You are our pastor up here. It’s not right for you to just take off and put your nose in something that doesn’t concern you.’

“I told him I wasn’t asking his permission to go. He said if I went then I should probably stay down there because I wouldn’t have a job when I got back,” Weible said. “I had to go. It was where I needed to be even though my young family needed me. I talked it over with Sharon and she agreed. She encouraged me to go. So, I called the church treasurer. He was a pretty wealthy businessman.

“When I called his office, he picked up the telephone. I explained to him that I was going to Selma to join Dr. King. He said he didn’t understand why I felt compelled to do that. Then, he said if I would come to this home and explain why it was important for me to get involved in the Civil Rights movement, he would not give me an advance

on my paycheck but he would give me the money from his own pocket. He said I didn't have to convince him. I just had to explain why it was important," Weible said.⁷³

In the tradition of early Christians who knew the cost of public witness to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, modern Christians put their lives on the line to serve the cause of advancing human and civil rights for African Americans. As such, these examples of public liturgy established a witness of sacrifice and disregard for one's own safety in an effort to be faithful to God's desire for people to love one another even if it meant laying down one's life.

Lyle Weible was one of many white clergy who left his safe surroundings and marched with Southern Blacks through Alabama. As he related his story more than forty years later, he said he eventually got the money he needed to go to Selma. When he returned home he still had a job, but the chairman of the trustee board left the church.

United Church of Christ and the United Farm Workers

Overlapping the Civil Rights Movement and growing out of the fields in California, a young migrant farm worker name Cesar Chavez, a devout Catholic, began agitating for improved working conditions for predominantly Mexican and Mexican American farm workers in lettuce and grape fields.

In 1973, clergy and laity from the United Church of Christ suspended business at their General Synod, chartered an airplane, and joined the farm workers in a public action in California. That event helped to shape the future of the United Farm Workers' movement.

General Synod IX presented opportunities for people of faith to create public liturgy around significant justice issues. As the UCC General Synod IX was convening, Cesar Chavez, founder of United Farm Workers, appealed for help from religious leaders.

⁷³ Lyle Weible, conversation with author, Pleasant Hills, TN: November 15, 2008.

Violence had broken out in California's Coachella Valley against farm workers organizing for better wages and conditions.

A group of delegates to the General Synod drafted a strong resolution affirming the rights of farm workers and brought it to the floor for a vote. The action was approved, but members of the church felt more was needed. They decided to leave the General Synod and committed themselves to performing public liturgy in the agricultural fields of California.

By faith, 95 delegates flew to the Coachella Valley to stand in solidarity with the farm workers. And by faith, Charles Lockyear, (treasurer of the United Church of Christ), deftly helped it happen. "Suddenly there were legal implications, insurance, travel arrangements," he recalls. The courageous witness of the "Coachella 95" was a defining moment for the UCC.⁷⁴

Taking the church out of the sanctuary of a national convention, placing it squarely in the trouble zone of protest, and providing a religious presence for justice was a sound demonstration of effective public liturgy.

Applying nonviolent tactics, the United Farm Workers union eventually joined the AFL-CIO as a legitimate bargaining agency, and successfully challenged the powerful lobbying groups of growers and major agriculture corporations to make changes that benefited migrant workers and their families.

The Wilmington 10

By faith that same General Synod voted to make available bail money for the "Wilmington 10," a group of eight young black men, one white woman, and a worker sent by the UCC to help during a North Carolina racial conflict.

⁷⁴ "Faith Witnesses," Sunday Bulletin (Cleveland, OH: United Church of Christ, August 19, 2007).

"Want to know how they got out?" Lockyear asks. "I had already borrowed in advance of the bicentennial "1776 Achievement Fund" campaign (with a goal of \$17 million for our 6 black American Missionary Association-founded colleges in the South). Now I needed to ask for \$2 million more – for bail!" By faith, Lockyear approached the bank's managers, securing the funds on our solid business record and assurance that "the UCC is good for it." ⁷⁵

The actions of the General Synod sent shockwaves throughout mainline denominations. The 'official' business of the church was interrupted to address urgent matters of social justice. Not everyone was in agreement with the actions taken to support a group of clergy to join Cesar Chavez and the farm workers, on the one hand, and to provide church funds to bailout civil rights workers in North Carolina.

Such determination on the part of the governing body of the United Church of Christ required a depth of encouragement to give bold courage to the leadership of the denomination.

For leaders to have courage, often it takes strong urging or encouragement from people in the pews. It is prodding from within the congregation that makes it possible for leadership to emerge that makes public liturgy possible. On the other hand, there are times when clergy are able to use their 'bully pulpits' to motivate their congregants to share their faith openly as a living witness of God's grace and Christ's mission.

Cardinal Jaime Cardinal Sin and People Power in the Philippines

While Europe and the United States witnessed social shifts under the tutelage of devout Christians, the church in the Philippines also played a key role in bringing about change in that nation's government.

⁷⁵ Faith Witnesses.

Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church Archdiocese in Manila, became frustrated with the fraud, corruption and murder under Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos and First Lady Imelda Marcos.

Cardinal Sin urged people when attended Catholic mass to follow the Gospel of Jesus and practice their faith in the streets of the Philippines as a means to protest the government's failure to protect and properly represent the nation, and address the needs of the poor. He was considered the architect of what became known as "People Power," a popular movement that toppled the Marcos regime in 1986. Radio Veritas, an independent radio station run by the Catholic Church, (called) for people to surround the Defense Ministry and block the movement of any troops that Marcos might send. Hundreds of thousands of people respond.⁷⁶

Cardinal Sin summed up the role of the Church in public life during his retirement speech in 2003, "My duty is to put Christ in politics. Politics without Christ is the greatest scourge of our nation."⁷⁷

Desmond Tutu and Truth and Reconciliation

Meanwhile, across another large body of water, the Indian Ocean, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of the Anglican Church Diocese in Cape Town, South Africa, used his bully pulpit to chastise the National Party and President P.W. Botha⁷⁸ for its racist policies and bureaucracy of apartheid to oppress the majority of Black, Colored, and Indian peoples in that country.

While visiting Cape Town in 2005, I was astonished to hear a volunteer at a center for runaway girls talk about her 'conversion' to Christianity. She was a white

⁷⁶ Monina Allarey Mercado, ed, "Philippines: Ferdinand vs. People Power." New York Times, TV Guide, Win Magazine, 1997, <http://www.fragmentsweb.org/TXT2/philiptx.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

⁷⁷ "Obituary: Cardinal Jaime Sin, Who Has Died at the Age of 76, Was Hugely Revered." BBC News, June 21, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4113534.stm> (accessed November 27, 2008).

⁷⁸ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 102.

housewife who had benefited from the apartheid system. In our conversation, she denounced her country's policy of racial separation. Her broken voice betrayed her newfound passion for racial justice. Although she had grown up in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, an apologist religious body that supported apartheid, the young woman explained she could not consider herself a Christian until she repented of her sin of racial prejudice. Her Christian faith inspired her to go to work at the center which housed Black girls who had suffered sexual and physical abuse while living on the streets. She felt her work with the girls helped her recover her humanity.

That South Africa's system of apartheid competes with God for loyalty and that the way out of the racial deadlock could only be in recognizing humankind as created in the image of God---these are the first two elements of Tutu's ubuntu theology of reconciliation.⁷⁹

It is quite possible the young, white woman in Cape Town had been touched by the ministry of Archbishop Tutu who integrated his religious conviction with a political perspective that was inclusive of all citizens in South Africa. He embodied 'the contemporary catechism of the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa'.⁸⁰

According to the catechism, the mission of the Church is "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ...as it prays and worships, proclaims the gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love...through the ministry of all the members."⁸¹

Advocating nonviolence and designing a process of "Truth and Reconciliation" based on his conviction 'all people can be redeemed', Bishop Tutu helped to forge an

⁷⁹ Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 83.

⁸⁰ Battle, 83.

⁸¹ Church of the Province of Southern Africa, *An Anglican Prayer Book* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1989), 432.

end to a centuries-old societal norms and the termination of a minority-rule government that led to democracy, free elections, and hope for peace with justice.

In his own words, Bishop Tutu provided a glimpse into his commitment to push the Church into the troubled waters of racial conflict without demonizing perpetrators and racists. He used the Bible as the basis for his vision to transform a society into a sanctuary for all its citizens:

*Just like a mother loves her child no matter what, so God loves
Even you if you don't succeed, even if you don't win. Our
Capitalist society despises weakness, vulnerability, and failure,
But God knows that failure is an inevitable part of life and that
Weakness and vulnerability are a part of creaturehood. They
Are part of what makes us human. It is through this weakness
And vulnerability that most of us learn empathy and compassion
And discover our soul.⁸²*

In all the events identified so far, global radicalization took place that touched the lives of people in local settings at distances far from the sites of origin. Each occurrence served to inspire and inform Christians and other people of faith throughout the world to embrace nonviolent strategies for social transformation. It is not to be missed how powerful public liturgy can remind the world of God's love for all people.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is another advocate of the universal application of forgiveness and compassion as nonviolent strategies to effectively change human hearts and minds. Although the context of his conflict affecting relations between Tibet and China is different from the Philippines in 1986 and South Africa in 1994, the Dalai Lama has consistently employed public liturgy to make his case for liberation and sovereignty.

The Dalai Lama says, "Compassion is something like a sense of caring, a sense of concern for others' difficulties and pain. Not only family and friends, but all other

⁸² Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 36-37.

people. Enemies also...But the moment you develop a sense of concern for others, you realize that, just like ourselves, they also want happiness; they also want satisfaction.”⁸³

Marshall Islands and Nuclear Refugees

I shall never forget walking into a high school classroom on the Marshallese atoll of Rong Rong. A team of high school students and their adult chaperons from the United States had traveled to the South Pacific island nation to study, work, and learn from the partners of the United Church of Christ, USA.

Dating back to the middle of the 19th Century, missionaries were sent to the Marshall Island to evangelize and convert people to Christianity. It was a successful enterprise. When we arrived there, nearly 40,000 people in a population of 68,126 (54.8 percent)⁸⁴ identified themselves as ‘Congregationalists,’ members of the United Church of Christ in the Marshall Islands.

For eleven years, from 1946 to 1957, the United States tested its newly developed nuclear weapons in the region. More than sixty-six atomic devices were launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in Southern California, traveled over five thousand miles, and detonated in the Pacific Ocean that surrounds the Marshall Island.⁸⁵

In March 1954, one of the nuclear weapons went awry, destroying marine and human life, and re-arranging the DNA of fetuses and unborn babies. The extent of harm suffered by the cultures of the Marshallese continues to be monitored and measured, including the births of so-called “jelly babies,” and infants with multiple defects. Older Marshallese complain of blood diseases and cancers that they attribute to the nuclear testing.

⁸³ The Dalai Lama and Victor Chan, *The Wisdom of Forgiveness: Intimate Conversations and Journeys* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2004), 166.

⁸⁴ United States Census Bureau, 2000, Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_the_Marshall_Islands

⁸⁵ Art Cribbs, prod., *Making the Connection*, DVD, New York, NY: United Church Board for World Ministries, 1992.

In one of the high school classroom were photographs of African American historical figures, including astronauts, entertainers, civil rights activists, educators, and politicians. Above the pictures was a banner which read, “Our people.” The display stopped me at the door. I stood and tried to understand how Black people in America could be received and connected to the nation of the Marshall Islands. It was an introduction to a discovery of human ties that marked the beginning of a broader appreciation for love, forgiveness, reconciliation, hope, and purpose.

The Outward Church

When people of faith step into Public Square as the Body of Christ, a great host that is the “cloud of witnesses”⁸⁶ joins in a celestial chorus to bear witness to God’s awesome power and presence. It is for a time such as this that the Church exists as a living testament of Jesus Christ, Son of God, who comes to demonstrate authentic worship in Covenant with God through right relationships with humanity.

The determination of the Adversary (Satan) to devour human souls has escalated to destroying young lives and weakening the Church’s commitment to confront corporate corruption and political expedience. Too often the Church has splintered between being visible and invisible, inward and outward even since its formation in the First Century.

Today, the invisible, inward Church has become preoccupied with issues of institutional structures and self sufficiency at the expense of salvation and healing of societies. But, there is a perpetual call to push the Church outward and to follow the models set forth by our early religious ancestors.

Robin Darling Young pointed her audience back to the persecution of early Christians whose martyrdom were acts of public liturgy. Their witness to Jesus as the Christ who came into the world as ‘living proof of God’s love’, put their lives at risk, but

⁸⁶ Hebrews 12:1

they did not dilute their message during periods of hostility.⁸⁷ They experienced the unfathomable, insurmountable presence of holiness during horrendous years of living in fear.

No doubt they were tempted to hide their faith by worshiping secretly in homes and ‘upper rooms’, but many early Christians exposed themselves to the threat of death because they defied orders to halt their preaching and teaching in open arenas, outside temples, and on the streets of Jerusalem and predominantly Gentile communities. They had courage to step outside the sanctuary and into the streets.⁸⁸

For the faith to go forward early Christians had to be visibly present among people living on the margins. Their courage remains a source of inspiration to modern-day people of faith.

Progressive Christians, for example, can borrow a page from Evangelical and conservative Christians who have placed themselves outside the sanctuary for many years. Their commitment to evangelism has sent them throughout the world challenging individuals and societies to change their relationships with others through compassion.

Evangelical leaders from 150 countries answered a call by the Reverend Billy Graham of the United States in 1974 to convene in Lausanne, Switzerland, for the purpose of developing strategies to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the world. In formulating a statement, they reflected an awareness of forgiveness and compassion:

“We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all (people). We therefore should share (God’s) concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex, or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive.

⁸⁷ Robin Darling Young, *In Procession Before the World: Martyrdom as Public Liturgy in Early Christianity* (Wisconsin: University of Marquette Press, 2001).

⁸⁸ Acts 2.

Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty.

“For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.”⁸⁹

It is necessary today for the visible, outward Church to manifest its presence with bold courage, faithfulness, and obedience to God’s will. We must listen attentively to the cries of the oppressed, suffering peoples of God and stand with them in the tradition of early Christians. To do so elevates public liturgy and gives credibility to religious communities in the eyes of people who question whether faith groups care about their plight.

⁸⁹ The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Lausanne Covenant: Christian Social Responsibility* (Switzerland: July 16-25, 1974).

CHAPTER 4

Applying Historic Models of Public Liturgy In Two Local Settings in California

The early church developed an understanding of ministry that implied service to others especially those who were poor, oppressed, desperate, hungry, and thirsty. The great desire to walk in Christ's steps, follow his teachings, and proclaim the coming of the realm of God compelled the early church to offer service and hospitality to strangers. Public liturgy was an essential component of practicing their faith. Their testimonies created a connection with the peoples of many nations that offered them hope, salvation and liberation. In order to demonstrate God's love for the world, Christians must step into the world to personify God's love and witness to Christ's presence. The purpose of the Church is to proclaim God's Covenant that identifies every human being as the "living image of God's love."⁹⁰

San Diego: Pastor Encouraged to Push Congregation to do Justice

As pastor of Christian Fellowship Congregational Church of San Diego, United Church of Christ, from 1999 to 2007, I experienced the power of encouragement from members of my congregation. Following a Sunday morning worship service about a year after I arrived, a medical doctor who was a faithful member met me at the front doors of the church. It was the tradition in that congregation for the pastor to greet people as they left the sanctuary.

While shaking hands, the doctor walked up to me and offered the usual congratulatory statements about the service, but he held my hand longer and said, "Pastor, that was a nice sermon today but I don't need to hear nice sermons. I need to be challenged. If you aren't willing to challenge me, it may be necessary for me to find another church." His challenge shifted my thinking and way of doing pastoral ministry in

⁹⁰ Art Cribbs, lecture, Soul Food Bible Study, San Marino, CA: San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, February 17, 2009.

San Diego. He pushed me to take greater risks and interpret the gospel through a presence of relevance in the community. In a very real sense that was what South African theologians would call a 'Kairos moment'⁹¹ in which something special, new and different began to bubble up that freed me to serve beyond the sanctuary.

A layperson in the pews decided to encourage his pastor to do more than preach friendly, soft sermons. He pushed me to delve into the sea of social justice and challenge members of the congregation to put their faith into action.

Soon after that conversation, an elderly woman asked if I had any desire to get involved in one of her projects. Carmen Samuels had been a missionary in Southern Africa, served in the Peace Corps, worked in China, migrated to the United States from Jamaica, and was a true firebrand when it came to justice ministries. The combination of two conversations conspired to energize and radicalize my approach to local church ministry. They urged me to move out of the sanctuary and into the streets.

Faith Leaders for Peace

As the United States was preparing to execute a pre-emptive military strike on Iraq in 2003, millions of American citizens raised our voices in protest to the aggressive posture of the government. A group of clergy and interfaith leaders began meeting on Monday mornings in a Jewish delicatessen in San Diego's Hillcrest neighborhood.

Around the table sat Rabbi Laurie Coskey, executive director of the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice; Rev. Vernon Mitchell, former pastor of the Church of the Brethren who had joined our church; Rosemary Johnston, Roman Catholic lay leader and executive director of the Interfaith Shelter Network; the Very Reverend Scott Richardson,

⁹¹ E. C. White, *Kaironomia*, p. 13, Kairos, Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kairos> (accessed November 28, 2008).

dean of St. Paul Episcopal Cathedral; Rev. Beth Johnson, Unitarian Universalist pastor; Imam Taha Hassane, director of the Islamic Center of San Diego; and me.⁹²

“Pray!” was the unanimous cry. “Let us come together in a public place and ask God to change the hearts and minds of those politicians who were fanning the flames of war,” someone suggested. We developed a plan to take spiritual action.

We organized public liturgy in downtown San Diego. We stood on the steps of the Federal Building and openly prayed out of our separate traditions. We came together as Christians (Protestants, Catholics, and Mormons); Jews (Conservative and Reformed), Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, Baha’i, Scientologists, and individuals with loose religious affiliations. We came and spoke English, Hebrew, Arabic, Spanish, and Japanese.

Some of us resided in urban areas, others lived in suburbs, and a few were from rural communities. We were rich, modest, and poor. White people with Black folk; Mexicans with Nicaraguans; Pacific Islanders with Mainlanders; Asians with Europeans all gathered together. There we formed a circle and we prayed. Each of us prayed out of our own traditions and in our first languages. We stood in Public Square and prayed aloud.

Immediately, as our voices were raised, we listened to the prayers of each other. We spoke our words in conversation with God. We prayed and we listened. Then, we discovered the wondrous glee of public liturgy. As each person said the words that formed a human-divine connection, we realized all of us had the same prayer.

The prayer of the Sikh was the prayer of the Baptist. The prayer of the Mormon was the prayer of the Buddhist. The prayer of the Muslim was the prayer of the Jew. The prayers of others were the prayers of us all.

⁹² See Appendix 4.

Praying ties us both to God and people of faith in every land throughout all times. It erases distinctions and bridges divisions. Prayer provokes cosmic events, creates fertile conditions, transforms the human soul, and shifts global, socio-historic realities.

In these times we must pray without ceasing, privately in closets, corporately in community, and openly as public liturgy. Instead of fretting about the absence of prayer in schools, we would do well to institutionalize prayer in our homes, Bible study, and whenever we gather as the Church. We have voice and authority to pray publicly and privately. We pray to confess our failings, offer forgiveness to others, and seek God's mercy.⁹³

When our group of interfaith religious leaders stood shoulder to shoulder on the steps of the Federal Building in Downtown San Diego to offer a witness for peace, a member of my congregation came with us. Deacon Leonard Scott, a 20 year veteran in the United States Navy and retired from a defense contract firm, wept as he prayed for a turn in the direction of the country's drive to war.

"Will it make a difference?" he asked as we ended our public liturgy of prayers. "Can we stop this war from happening?"

I don't know if we will stop the war," I told him. "But, whenever people of God come together in prayer, it makes a difference," I tried to assure him.

That was in early March 2003 just days before the United States launched a pre-emptive strike on Baghdad. The war was on and those in command had no intent or desire to be deterred.

Weeks later, Deacon Scott raised his questions again during a Wednesday night Bible study. "Did it make a difference when we went downtown and prayed?" he asked.

⁹³ Art Cribbs, "Interfaith Prayers in the Streets," Cribb's Notes, San Marino Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, San Marino, CA, July 29, 2007.

“What do you think?” I retorted.

“I don’t know,” he said.

“I trust God,” I told him. “I trust God to hear our prayers. I believe if we did not pray we would have placed ourselves on the side of those who are bent on killing innocent people. Yes, I think it made a difference,” I said.

The war continued long after our first prayer vigil. We returned to the Federal Building and we prayed again. We brought coffins and an altar. We ministered the Sacrament of Communion. We prayed in different voices from our many religious and cultural traditions. The media returned with us and broadcast our liturgy on radio and television. Newspapers ran pictures and stories.

Rabbi Laurie Coskey of the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, came vested in her traditional garb. She read from the book, *Prayers for Peace*. Imam Shariff Batiki came from the Islamic Center and offered prayers in Arabic. A doctor whose family was in danger in Palestine shared his stories of worry and love. International guests from Germany were in the crowd, and expressed appreciation and surprise that a diverse group of American religious leaders could stand in public and pray against the War in Iraq. We were promised our public liturgy would be shared in Europe.

Transformation does not happen in the blink of an eye. It does not come as a blazing star. It is protracted and often not easily detected. It comes in God’s time which is not based on human conventions of measuring hours and days. It started a movement of interfaith public prayers through the streets of San Diego that continued for at least four years; and requires conscientiousness grounded in ancient wisdom. There is an inexplicable joy that floods the souls of faithful prayer warriors who stand in the gap and proclaim God’s love and Christ’s amazing grace.

There is an African proverb, “*When you pray, move your feet.*” It could be the motto for social justice movements that swept the world in the 20th Century. Dance as prayer, rhythm as prayer, and movement as prayer describes ways in which Christians can seek God to assure their actions are consistent with the purpose of the Church.

Erik Olson Fernandez Sidewalk Protest

In celebration of his 30th birthday, Erik Olson Fernandez decided to spend twelve nights sleeping on sidewalks in Downtown San Diego. Born in Juarez, Mexico, just across the border from El Paso, Texas, Erik and his brother grew up in a single-parent home in Central Ohio. Their mother, Bianca, raised her sons in the Roman Catholic Church. She instilled in them a fervent spirit for justice. Erik attended law school at Boston College before he moved to Southern California and worked as a community organizer with an Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) program, the San Diego Organizing Project.

There are four historic personalities who influenced Erik’s world view: Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez. His commitment to nonviolence has inspired him to study under Dr. Bernard Lafayette, a disciple of Dr. King, who lives and works in Rhode Island.

Erik’s decision to sleep on the streets was based on his desire to draw attention to the plight of homeless veterans, families and children who were part of the neglected and ignored poor in San Diego County.

“More than 22 percent of the children in San Diego live below the poverty line,” Erik explained. He created a make-shift billboard out of bed sheets and scrawled a litany of abuses and offenses against poor residents and transients in the county. He also called on city and county elected officials to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A year earlier, Erik had attended the annual '*Martin Luther King, Jr. All People's Breakfast*' at the San Diego Civic Auditorium. It was sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice (formerly the National Conference for Christians and Jews). I gave the invocation in which prayers for responsible civic leaders to pay attention to the needs of all citizens in the county were included.

Erik apparently heard something that sparked his soul. Several weeks after the breakfast, I received an e-mail from him asking questions about the United Church of Christ. I invited him to attend one of our Sunday worship services.

Erik came to church and brought a friend with him. He also brought some documents describing his work and asked me to read and respond to some questions he had put in his packet. He had developed a process of interviewing me as his potential new pastor. Although he had grown up in the Catholic Church, he had left the 'organized religion' and relied on a spirituality that was personal and informal.

The morning he went to the All People's Breakfast signaled a change that eventually led him to join our congregation.

February can be cold and wet in San Diego. The year of his 30th birthday was no exception. Under clear skies with sparkling stars, the crisp, winter nights wiped gusts of bone-chilling air throughout his body. He used his overnight stays from home to "evangelize" passersby, police, business owners, and downtown residents about the conditions of persons no longer desired in the downtown corridor.

A new baseball stadium was under construction, and it was intended to be the financial anchor that would attract business and homeowners to the downtown area. Erik's concerns about the poor did not jibe with the priorities of the Centre City Development Agency, Downtown Merchants' Association, or John Moores' San Diego

Padres Major League Baseball team. But he was determined to make a personal statement about public neglect.

Late into the night, Erik held a vigil with burning candles, the Bible, and writings of his four heroes. He conversed with curious pedestrians. He prayed. Night after night, he endured verbal abuse, physical assaults by security guards and local police, but he never raised his voice in anger or sought to retaliate. He continued to come back every night after work and set up camp.

On the night of his birthday, members from our church's Wednesday night Bible study joined him on the sidewalks and brought a birthday cake with candles. Television news crews and several newspaper reporters also showed up. A small group of about 20 supporters were on hand to encourage him and witness his peaceful presence.

Erik Fernandez initiated the first of what would become an annual public vigil around his birthday and always to speak out for those who are mute, invisible, forgotten, and not recognized.

Two years later, Erik moved his 12 nights of outdoor living to the front yard sidewalk at the home of San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy.⁹⁴

Murphy had campaigned on a promise to clean up corruption in the city, and identified an ethics committee to deal with public figures who operated with conflicts of interests. Murphy, a former superior court judge and member of the United Methodist Church, had the appearance of an upstanding politician. However, during his State of the City address, he failed to mention the poor, the homeless, or the skyrocketing housing prices that locked out underpaid workers from the housing market.

⁹⁴ Kelly Davis, "Mayor No Comment: Why Won't Dick Talk to Us?," San Diego City Beat, October 27, 2004, <http://www.sdcitybeat.com/cms/story/detail/?id=2534> (accessed November 27, 2008).

Erik took it upon himself to bring those issues to the Mayor's attention. After several unsuccessful attempts to meet privately with the mayor or a member of his staff, Erik began attending meetings of city commissions set up to meet the needs of the public.

The lack of good will among the commissioners to take the issues seriously frustrated Erik so much, he felt the only way he could garner the Mayor's attention was to go to his home and wait. This time he decided to dedicate one month sleeping on the sidewalk every night outside the mayor's home.

Joined by two other men, David Rodriquez, a student at San Diego City College, and Kevin Nash, a mediator with the city's mediation services, they unrolled their sleeping bags, lined the sidewalk with candles, reading materials, a bed sheet billboard listing their grievances, and waited. The mayor refused to meet with them, but held a press conference inside his home to express fear for the safety of his family.

Meanwhile, on the sidewalk, Erik led his companions and group of supporters that numbered about 30 people, in song, prayers, and Scripture readings. With his mild voice and boyish face (he looks about 10 years younger than his age), Erik sounded his commitment and resolved to remain on the streets until the mayor opened his doors and listened to the complaints of the poor.

Under the watchful eyes of police assigned to protect the mayor and his home, the trio slept unmolested. It was a far cry and very different experience from the two previous years when they were kicked by police and hounded by security guards patrolling the downtown business district and construction zone. "I have never felt so safe before in my life," Erik said at the end of the month-long campout.

One man with a vision and burning heart for justice posed a threat to the status quo and captured the imagination of community organizers.

In a subsequent action outside the home of San Diego Mayor Murphy, Erik, David, and Kevin managed to get arrested. They spent one night in jail. They were charged with violating a city municipal code that prohibited public demonstrations outside a residence.

Their arrest delivered an opportunity to take their case to court, a forum in which they represented themselves without an attorney, and explained the reasons why they decided to return to the mayor's home. Convinced they were on the side of God of justice and the oppressed, the three men exercised nonviolent strategies in acts of civil disobedience as an expression of their faith in action. "Faith without works is dead."

Found guilty by a jury of their peers, the judge sentenced the men to community service. They spent their community service time teaching high school and college students the core values of Jesus, Gandhi, King, and Chavez in nonviolent training programs, and they followed a biblical principle:

*"Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet;' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does not wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."*⁹⁵

Erik Fernandez offers a personal witness of Christ presence and God's love. His model of ministry demonstrates conviction and faithful servant hood. He challenges the Church to step beyond the walls and go forward with love and concern into the world as Jesus would have us to do.

Hans Kung: People of God

Hans Kung would applaud Erik for his tenacity, vision, and testimony. Certainly, Erik Fernandez, a layman, would be included among those Kung identifies as the people of God who lived in the tradition of faithful worship and service.

⁹⁵ Romans 13:8-10 NRSV.

Of significance, Kung argues the Church cannot rely on tradition or escape its context within modern society.⁹⁶ The world is changing because of catastrophic events, including wars, scientific achievements, mass communication, divides between industrialized nations and recently-emerging new governments. Global economies are melding into fewer units, if not a single system, for more convenient commerce. Rapid growth and transitions give rise to shifting values and ethics.⁹⁷

The Church can no longer effectively view itself outside the reach of societal influences. In fact, the dual passage of impact between Church and society makes it necessary for a continual evaluation of how the Church understands itself, its purpose, and its relevance.

Kung is convinced the Church is a dynamic organism that moves with the times. It is not stagnant or locked in tradition. Circumstances, events, and cultural fluidity force the Church as a living body to adapt without compromising or losing its essential character. Therefore, he relies solely on God to give true definition to the Church by following the original intent of the gathered community among the followers of Jesus Christ. Such a strict definition distinguishes civil religion and culturally popular churches from what Kung describes as ‘the Body of Christ’.

He offers radical views about the officers of the Church that is inclusive of all believers. He argues an educated or learned elite is not necessary to lead the Church. Further, he offers an understanding of such leadership to include “the priesthood of all believers.” As could be expected, the Church hierarchy did not agree with this position and rejected Kung’s contention.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Hans Kung, *The Church*, trans. Ray Ockenden and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1976).

⁹⁷ James K. Galbraith, *The Predator State: How Conservatives Abandoned the Free Market and Why Liberals Should Too* (New York: Free Press, 2008).

⁹⁸ Kung.

Mahatma Gandhi's Truth

Mahatma Gandhi was not a Christian but had universal influence on Christians in the 20th Century. Gandhi demonstrated public witness begins with one's self. While the temptation may be to focus outward toward others, perhaps as objects, Gandhi's self exploration returns the attention back to self. In a way, it models Jesus' instruction, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." In this sense, public liturgy takes shape within the participant first through prayer and self awareness, then is reflected in open space that is the public sphere.

It is a most unusual person who experiments with his life and turns his body into a human laboratory. Gandhi pushed himself to the extremes of survival in a life-long effort to test his will and overcome temptations. He used his human strength to inspire a struggling, oppressed nation to search deeply within itself for the necessary resources to unite and become sovereign. As a public figure, he showed how the power of love and justice through truth can transform both a person and a nation.

Ultimately, Gandhi integrated the high ideals of ancient wisdom with his desire to embody purity and saintliness. He discovered by embracing his humanity he could attain consciousness of the divine. He successfully shaped the foundation of a nation, floored an empire, and motivated a generation emerging from war to see pacifism as a path worthy to pursue. At the base of his experimentation and accomplishments is his commitment to know and honor truth.

Gandhi argues one becomes acquainted with the truth as a child and preserves the integrity of truth throughout one's life. He states, "This path has always been for the

brave because a much greater effort is required to go up the steep slope of truth than to climb the Himalayas.” He goes on to make his seminal statement, “Truth is God.”⁹⁹

This statement represented a change in Gandhi’s perspective. Earlier he had said, “God is truth.” “The word *satya* is derived from *sat*, which means that which is. *Staya* means a state of being. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why *sat* or *satya* is the right name for God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth.

The juxtaposition is a significant shift in that Truth is totally encompassing without compromise. Further, it cannot be diminished; thus, it is absolute. More importantly I would submit Gandhi elevates Truth to be reality; sacred and worthy of a person to commit her/his entire life to achieve and retain. It is not lost that he attributes the quality and attainment of truth as a pursuit reserved only for the “brave.” The path to truth parallels the road to nonviolence. In fact, Gandhi would say it is the same road or path.

“So long as we are unable to see through the wall of the body, the qualities of truth and non-violence will not become fully manifest in us. When we think of pursuing truth, we must stop mistaking the body for ourselves, for we shall have to die in the pursuit of truth. The same is true of non-violence.

“I cannot become wholly free of violence so long as I have the feeling that this body is mine. One who desires to have vision of God will have to transcend the body, to despise it, to court death.”¹⁰⁰ Gandhi goes on to emphasize “The quest for Truth involves *tapascharya*, self-suffering, sometimes even unto death.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Raghavan Iyer, *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (Oxford: University Press, 1993), 223.

¹⁰⁰ Mohandas Gandhi, Vol. 43, (India: 10 September, 1928 - 14 January, 1929), 61.

¹⁰¹ Iyer. 233.

It is only through rejection of the body that one discovers real life and the meaning or purpose of life. The pursuit of pleasure is delusional and can never be satisfied. Similarly, the vain race for money as proposed under capitalism results in an endless trudge of disappointing ventures.

Truth is relational. Just as Gandhi discovered the power of Truth as Eternal and Divine, it is the Source of human relations. Separately, my father's perennial instruction to me as a child under his roof, "Son, your word is your bond. If you ever break it, you cannot get it back. Always keep your word."

Jesus' Model of Public Liturgy

Jesus and Gandhi often walked the same path; they also were on paralleled roads; but, in the final analysis, Gandhi and Jesus are on a collision course with each other in their quests for Truth that, if followed, leads to the highest regard for human life and in a commitment to nonviolent strategies to overcome conflict. It is then we recognize God's presence (Imago Dei) in the faces and lives of every human being.

As a Christian, I can only love others when I am aware and know clearly who I am in Christ. How do I separate myself from my ego when I am housed in my corpus?

The practical critique of the reason for our being, according to Kant, makes it impossible to separate ourselves from God. The selfless existence is to be moral. The gap between God and human beings can only be bridged by good works and good life.

It is only through the power of the presence of Christ within me can I live my faith. This pushes us to seek an understanding of the cause of events and their effects. Intellectual pursuit is one way of striving toward integration of God in the human experience. But, it is a partial approach that requires practical application.

Designing public liturgy opportunities that are other-focused and structured to be an outward expression of our faith moves congregations into sacred space that is

occupied by the living realities and conditions of other people. God created a world of social interaction and reverence for the Holy. Our failure to comply with divine instruction to be good stewards of Creation and love one another comes as a result of placing all our attention on ourselves. We become worshipers of our bodies and things made with our hands. We see only ourselves and miss the beauty, majesty and glory of God's Creation.

Turning to Christ offers a clear vision of ministry beyond one's self. At every turn, Jesus entered the intersection of culture and civilization to negotiate improved relationships between humankind and God, and among people to work out ways in which they could live together in peace without violence.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Specifically, in Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the youthful theologian, organized members of the Lutheran Church to form the Confessing Church in opposition to the rise of Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich during the 1930s. Bonhoeffer challenged his readers to consider living for others and not just ourselves. Focusing outward allows individuals to see the connecting opportunities for community.

Like the Apostle Paul, Bonhoeffer suffered for his faith. He spent the last two years of his life in prison for conspiring to assassinate Hitler. He used that time to serve inmates and prison guards, retaining his call to ministry. The welfare of others always was his primary concern. He believed it was necessary to suffer with his people if he was to be an effective minister after the war.¹⁰²

Bonhoeffer did not offer himself as a visible model of righteous. He understood the purpose of Jesus' ministry as a call for every person to be an "extraordinary" presence.

¹⁰² Todd Kappelman, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Man and His Mission." Probe Ministries <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/bonhoeffer.html> (accessed March 18, 2009).

The call to the “extraordinary” is the inevitable risk men (sic) must take when they follow Christ. And therefore Jesus warns us to take heed. He calls a halt to the innocent spontaneous joy we get from making our Christianity visible. He calls us to reflect on what we are doing.¹⁰³

Bonhoeffer pressed his readers to examine their lives in a comparative mirror with Jesus. He concentrated his latter writings to what he termed, “cheap grace,” which has brought chaos and destruction; it is the intellectual assent to a doctrine without a real transformation in the sinner's life.¹⁰⁴

Bonhoeffer preferred “costly grace” which ‘calls us to follow Jesus Christ’ at the risk of losing our life. But, there is assurance found in Jesus’ words, “If anyone would come after me, he (sic) must deny himself (sic) and take up his (sic) cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his (sic) life will lose it, but whoever loses his (sic) life for me will save it.”¹⁰⁵

On April 9, 1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed in a Nazi prison. His earthly life was taken, but his faith informed his conviction that Eternal Life had only just begun.

A Call to Nonviolent Public Witness

Given the numerous flawed attempts to traverse bustling boulevards that threaten even the most skilled pilgrims, it is understandable why people step away from venturing into the danger zone of human conduct with a message of nonviolence. But, that is exactly what the Church is called to do. It urges us onward as an institutional bulwark. It says to the person, “You are not alone. God is with you,” and there are others.

That great ‘cloud of witnesses’ previously mentioned suffered; many were murdered because of their faith and love of Christ. There martyrs came from a cross section of life: military leaders, prophets, kings, women and men who trusted in God and

¹⁰³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995) 157.

¹⁰⁴ Todd Kappelman.

¹⁰⁵ Luke 9:23-24 NRSV.

persevered. They were led through the worse that life experiences tossed at them, but they never lost their humanity. Many never gave in to violence. What is our relationship with those pioneers of the faith? How do their stories fit with ours?

Eugene Peterson's translation of Luke 2:40 offers one understanding, *"God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours."* That suggests our faith is also not complete apart from theirs.

Gary E. Peluso-Verdend describes this well: "Imagine a race, staggered over time, that no one can finish until the last of the participants has entered." He pictures a cloud of witnesses assembled near the starting line (New Proclamation Year C 2007). No wonder that they're gathered there: they are watching a race that is still going on! The race, of course, is not a sprint but a long-distance one, perhaps like a Boston Marathon of Faith. And it is a race not for sport or entertainment but one with utmost importance."¹⁰⁶

Public Liturgy as 'Speaking Truth to Power'

It is dangerous to speak the truth in the temple, church, synagogue, and in the sanctuary. Jesus got in trouble more than once inside the hollowed walls of worshiping space. He was chased out, into the streets, to the edges of the cliff where those who once praised him threatened to kill him.

The truth can be too much to bear enclosed in places where the world is intended to be shut out. Inside the sanctuary, there is an expectation of order and decency. People are expected to behave in an orderly and cordial manner. Truth that confronts power is not welcomed.

¹⁰⁶ "Faith Witnesses." S.A.M.U.E.L. Sermon Seeds, United Church of Christ, August 19, 2007, <http://www.ucc.org/worship/samuel/> (accessed March 8, 2009).

Truth that reflects the inclusive story of faith is dashed against the walls and tossed to the wind. Such was the fate of Jesus in his hometown, inside the synagogue where it was his custom to go.¹⁰⁷ As long as his words were soothing and gracious, the people were pleased to receive him and listen to his every word. But, more is required of Christians than to speak words of comfort.

There is an urgency that makes it necessary to press the Church outward. These are times reminiscent of the days of Eli, the wicked priest of Israel: “Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.”¹⁰⁸

Arousing from a state of sleep or denial about its ineffectiveness has shaken the faith of many church-goers who recognize the increasing impact destructive popular culture is having on the quality of human life. In the mid-1980s, a new music genre entered America that has had an unprecedented run through nearly three generations. Its lyrical appeal numbs the inner-being and gyrates both psyche and physical body. The allure of sexuality mixed with hard, cash currency has captured youth and adults in a society drunk on idolatry.

Gangsta rap and hip hop music saturate airwaves, nightclubs, automobiles, and homes with a blasting sound that spewed untold scenarios of domestic violence, criminality, psycho pathetic conduct, and anti-human ideology. Unfortunately, the repetitious, rhythmic percussion captures an innate sensation that is hypnotic, compulsive and addictive. Listeners are trapped in a melodic world that carries them into the realm of the demonic as homicidal treatise leads their vulnerable souls into a virtual prison. This is the contemporary competitor of tabernacles of faith.

¹⁰⁷ Luke 4:16-30 NRSV.

¹⁰⁸ 1 Samuel 3:1 NRSV.

Instead of contesting graphic displays of abhorrent, despicable overtures of human demise, some religious communities have embraced the antics and rhymes of popular culture to bolster attendance in their otherwise dying congregations. The spiritual void is being filled with superficial, banal bop that beats out a tempo of compromising principles and values.

It is not ‘flesh and blood’ as the Apostle Paul stated, rather it is an audio and video pronouncement of self destruction that threatens our fate. This pap reflects life without purpose; the chase for glitz and bling that binds the heart, mind, and soul to gods made of clay and human hands. How do people of faith respond?

Imagine if people facing the lost of jobs and homes who now congregate in ‘tent cities’ and huddle under freeway overpasses were to turn those gatherings into sacred spaces where prayer in the tradition of Psalm 107 took place, what would happen. What if despair were changed to hope? What if misery became an opportunity for mission? How would Christians, for example, understand our call and purpose in these days of economic uncertainty and moral decay?

“To be a serious Christian at the beginning of the twenty-first century is to know that the churches exist in a state of prolonged crisis. The crisis lies in their effective, though not necessarily conspicuous, disestablishment; but not so much in the fact of their disestablishment as in their refusal to acknowledge this fact. As long as they can manage it, the churches continue attempting to function as though nothing had changed. There are exceptions but too few of them.

“When human beings and institutions postpone for some indefinite future the problems of the present, they only increase the problematic nature of the latter, and leave for future generations a situation that may well have become, by then, irresolvable.

Worse, they miss the opportunities that are present today and may by tomorrow have disappeared.”¹⁰⁹

Public liturgy offers practical ways of doing ministry. Practical Christianity engages the Body of Christ to come forward with vision and faith. It recognizes what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described as the “urgency of now.”¹¹⁰

The dynamics of social neglect rush in the chorus of detestable conditions that snare the vulnerable and stymies critical response. A “go slow” approach to social injustice is a means to conspire with the forces driving an agenda of denial and perpetual mistreatment. It operates on the premise of an uncaring, absent God who tolerates the suffering of innocent people.

Acting with urgency does not fall into the trap of recklessness and aggressive, violent reaction to tyranny and oppression. Rather, appropriate, timely, elevated voices of protest and concern give dignity, purpose, and broad scope to circumstances that appear beyond the resolution of local communities.

West San Gabriel Valley: Then and Now

Throughout time, leaders have stepped forward to face the daunting foes of justice and righteousness. There is a tradition of God’s servants heralding the way of new life and restoring our covenant with God. Every generation is afforded a cadre of courageous women and men who have placed their lives in the danger zones as a testament of God’s love. They stand where others dare not. Their compassion for humankind overshadows treacherous, brutal efforts to deny goodness.

A lesson I learned shortly after graduating high school was my inability to see change. A group of college students worked in West San Gabriel Valley just east of

¹⁰⁹ Douglas John Hall, *On Being the Church after Christendom; In Essentials Unity: Reflections on the Nature and Purpose of the Church in Honor of Frederick R. Trost*, eds, M. Douglas Meeks and Robert D. Mutton (Minneapolis, MN: Kirk House Press, 2001).

¹¹⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Time to Break Silence,” sermon, Riverside Church, New York, NY, April 4, 1967.

downtown Los Angeles in an eight-week internship sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee in Pasadena, California.

Every day, we gathered early for prayers and to plan our course of action. We met with civic leaders, community groups, churches, and almost anyone who would give us the time of day. Our mission was to present a call for response to address urban unrest. We believed through education and exposure, people in affluent, suburban Los Angeles could get involved in the lives of families across town. As college students, we were optimistic and believed good people would come forward and meet our challenge.

For eight weeks we planned, met, strategize, and offered visions of new relationships across cultural, geographical, racial, social, and financial lines. We dared to believe communities could come together to cross boundaries in order to secure a more peaceful future. We worked diligently and faithfully. By the end of the project, we were tired and disillusioned. It seemed everything we had done was in vain. We returned to our various homes. We went back to school. One of us had come from Paris and he got on an airplane to France. We were young, wide-eyed, and hopeful. But, our spirits had been dampened by the harsh and often hurtful responses.

We had been threatened. Bomb threats had been called to our telephone. We were told to go back home. We experienced ugliness and fear. The summer ended and there was no tangible evidence our efforts mattered. But, there was the amazing, invisible hand of God steadily working and always present. Our daily prayers were answered.

About six months after the project was over, people in West San Gabriel Valley started organizing skill centers and community programs for children and youth in Monrovia and Duarte.

When we thought we had been met with deaf ears and heartless souls, a germ of goodness was nurturing in the lives of our audiences. It was not within the time frame we had imagined, but important, creative activities were started.

Prayer is the key to all successful movements. Our faith in God is sufficient to move mountains and open doors. More importantly, God's faithfulness and love for humanity renews life and restores Covenant.

The Church as the Body of Christ is comprised of human beings who gather in community to forge an alternative to carnal, temporal, forces that permeate societies. We are not called to be change-agents. That is not the purpose of the Church. We are called to be faithful and obedient to God. We are here to bear witness to God's love and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We invite others to join an ancient movement of service to humanity that is reverent to God.

How could we have known then that 40 years later I, an African American, progressive Christian, would return to West San Gabriel Valley as the pastor of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, in the city that once was home to the John Birch Society?

Public Liturgy: The Ministry of All Believers

Everyone is invited to partake in Christ's mission. The work before us is great, but the laborers are few. We can ill-afford to turn away anyone. We welcome and embrace any brave soul who offers to step forward into public space as a witness to God's love. The work before us is exciting and challenging. It revives the human soul and refreshes our resolve to be relevant and purposeful in our time. We strive to be faithful, obedient, and grateful for the opportunities to stand in solidarity with God's people in all places. I have been blessed to have traveled to distant lands and listened to

the testimonies of sisters and brothers who have experienced God's love through difficult times.

“The United Church of Christ has a code of standards by which the ordained minister must live. It begins as follows: I believe that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ; that the privilege of witnessing to the gospel in the church and society belongs to every baptized Christian; that God empowers the ministry of the church and its members by the Holy Spirit; that the church nurtures faith, evokes gifts, and equips its members for service; and that God calls certain of the church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church.

“This initial paragraph celebrates the vocation (call) of the whole church and all members to the service of Jesus Christ through our baptism. Thus all who are baptized are under the yoke of God and therefore submit to the discipline of engaging regularly in prayer, reading and studying scripture, and rendering loving service in the name of Jesus Christ. The code goes on then to say, on behalf of the ordained ministry, ‘God calls certain of the church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the local church.’”¹¹¹

All of us are given opportunities to participate in public liturgy and witness God's love. We are invited to join in Christ's mission and go outside the sanctuary, into the open air spaces, and engage in the transformative expressions that free the human spirit. Communities throughout the world are waiting for the Church and people of faith in the United States to stand up and be counted among those who care about all God's people. In the words of Eugene Patterson, ‘we are authorized, commanded, and commissioned by

¹¹¹ Close.

God' to go throughout the world for the purpose of training everyone we meet to live "in this way of life," marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Creator, Christ, and Comforter. Further, we are to instruct people to practice love, forgiveness, compassion, and the teachings of Christ. Jesus promised his disciples and us, "I'll be with you as you do this, day after day, right up to the end of the age."¹¹²

That is the Good News given to us to proclaim broadly, boldly, and continually to a world that awaits a Word of hope, salvation and liberation. It is the reason public liturgy is a necessary action that takes the church from the sanctuary to the streets.

¹¹² Eugene Peterson, *The Message: Matthew 28:18-20* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press, 1993).

CHAPTER 5

The Project

*Then Jesus came to them and said,
“All authority in heaven and on earth
Has been given to me.
Therefore go and make disciples
Of all nations, baptizing them in the name
Of the Father and of the Son and of the
Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey
Everything I have commanded you.
And surely I am with you always,
To the very end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:18-20)*

Background

San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ was founded in November 1948 in the suburban community eleven miles east by northeast of downtown Los Angeles near the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains. The City of San Marino prides itself as the “City of Beautiful Lawns.” The city’s former restrictive covenants prohibited “Jews and Negroes” from purchasing homes within its boundaries. At one time it housed the headquarters of the Constitutionally-conservative John Birch Society, founded in 1958 by Robert Welch.¹¹³

Today, its 12,945 residents are largely divided between an estimated 49 percent pan-Asian (including Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, and Vietnamese) and approximately 48 percent white homeowners.¹¹⁴

San Marino is one of the most affluent communities in the state of California with a school district comprised of only four campuses: two elementary schools (K.L. Carver and William L. Valentine), Henry E. Huntington Middle School, and San Marino High School.

¹¹³ “About the John Birch Society.” John Birch Society <http://www.jbs.org/index.php/about/john-birch-society> (accessed November 29, 2008).

¹¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 census http://www.ci.san-marino.ca.us/pdf_forms/citymanager/CityofSanMarinoDemographics_pg1.pdf (accessed November 29, 2008).

San Marino Unified School District earned a district Academic Performance Index (API) score of 944 out of a possible 1000. The San Marino Unified School District also met all Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmark indicators required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Therefore, the SMUSD has once again earned the distinction as California's highest performing unified school district.¹¹⁵

San Marino is an enclave surrounded by the cities of Alhambra, Pasadena, San Gabriel, and South Pasadena; and unincorporated Los Angeles County on its eastern border.

There are five churches within the city limits: First Church of Christ, Scientist; Saints Felicitas and Perpetua Roman Catholic, St. Edmonds Episcopal, San Marino Community Presbyterian, and San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ.¹¹⁶

Shortly after I arrived as pastor of San Marino UCC in April 2007, the Reverend Jeffrey O'Grady, pastor of San Marino Community Church (Presbyterian Church USA), came to my office and welcomed me to the area. He attended my installation service and we met at least twice to exchange ideas and concerns about the city and our congregations.

San Marino Community Presbyterian Church, considered the "official" church of San Marino, hosts the mayor's annual *State of the City* address and the International Rotary Club's weekly meetings. It operates a pre-school on its premises and has an older, diverse membership.

Nearly 18 months later I met Father George Wordward, rector of St. Edmonds. Clergy in San Marino do not convene or attend common meetings. Each of us is engaged in activities initiated within our separate congregations.

¹¹⁵ San Marino Unified School, http://www.san-marino.k12.ca.us/apps/news/show_News.jsp?REC_ID=68754&id=0&rn=4937282 (accessed November 29, 2009).

¹¹⁶ See Appendix 19.

Our church is the smallest congregation in San Marino with an estimated weekly attendance of 61 in Sunday morning worship. However, during the week we have approximately 800 to 1,000 people who visit our campus. There are seven Alcoholics Anonymous groups that meet almost every night and on Wednesday afternoon; a suicide survivor support group, a domestic violence support group; two weekly “Mommy and Me” music programs for mothers and infants; a weekly Suzuki Music Training program that attracts more than 100 elementary age students; three art classes; a drama group from nearby Monrovia that uses one of our classrooms for rehearsals; and a more ‘fundamentalist,’ charismatic congregation of the International Church of Christ in Los Angeles has services in our sanctuary several Sunday evenings every month.

San Marino UCC also operates a very successful pre-school which has been open for nearly 40 years. Many of the area’s families have used the pre-school to launch their children’s academic careers.

In 2008 the church opened the Stillspeaking Theatre, an Equity-wavered, professional community theater. In its premiere season, the theater presented four plays: *Awaiting Judgment*, *The Runner Stumbles*, *Facing East*, and *The Mystery Plays*.

The congregation is very generous in its use of space to outside organizations as well as its support of ministries throughout the West San Gabriel Valley. According to its Mission Statement, “*In response to God's all-encompassing presence and unconditional love, we at San Marino Congregational Church, a worship-centered community, are spreading the Good News of God's Love to all, working to heal human divisions, and striving for justice and peace.*” ¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ “Who We Are,” San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ <http://www.Sanmarinoucc.org/howeare.html>.

Members of San Marino UCC went through a very difficult process to determine if they would allow their congregation to be registered as “Open and Affirming,” a designation within the United Church of Christ that welcomes gays, lesbians, bi-sexual, and transgender persons into the church as well as call GLBT ordained clergy to serve as their pastor or on the church staff. After months of meeting and prayerful deliberation, San Marino Congregational UCC voted to be an “Open and Affirming Church.”

That decision followed a history of providing an ‘alternative’ presence in a community dominated by politically, socially, and religiously conservative residents. In a conversation with an attendee at the funeral of Nancy Trask,¹¹⁸ a longtime activist in West San Gabriel Valley and former member of the San Gabriel Unified School District, he made the remark, “Once there were 13 Democrats in the City of San Marino and everybody knew their names.”¹¹⁹

Event #1 Sacred Conversation II: Race and Racism in America

A year later, our congregation received national press coverage when we hosted the first of two forums on *Sacred Conversations on Race and Racism in America*.¹²⁰

In response to negative attacks against the United Church of Christ as a result of the presidential candidacy of Illinois Senator Barack Obama, then a member of Trinity UCC in Chicago, the denomination’s president the Reverend John Thomas called for a church-wide discussion to address race in America.

Senator Obama’s pastor, the Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Wright, Jr., was accused of cursing the United States from his pulpit in a sermon he delivered shortly after the

¹¹⁸ Alfred Lee, “Trask, Schools Advocate, Dies,” Whittier Daily News, November 22, 2008, http://www.whittierdailynews.com/ci_11053310 (accessed March 8, 2009).

¹¹⁹ Attendee, testimony, Funeral of Nancy Trask, San Gabriel, CA, San Gabriel Country Club, November 26, 2008.

¹²⁰ John Thomas, “We Need a Sacred Conversation on Race,” Cleveland, OH: United Church of Christ, May 18, 2008, <http://www.ucc.org/news/significant-speeches/thomas-justice-must-be.html> (accessed November 29, 2008).

tragedies of September 11, 2001.¹²¹ Worldwide reports of Rev. Wright's statements ignited a firestorm of words that saturated radio and television broadcasts for weeks.

After President Thomas urged local churches to engage in dialogues about race and racism, San Marino Congregational invited Clive Hoffman, a white South African, who came to the United States in 1957 to study at UCLA, and Dr. Corrie Ort, a white Indonesian college professor of sociology and anthropology, to lead a discussion on the subject.

The week before the event, the Associated Press sent a reporter and photographer to our church. They spent two days interviewing our members and attending our worship service in addition to covering the *Sacred Conversation* event.¹²²

My sermon on the Sunday of the forum focused on how prejudice against persons because of their physical features, including race, age, nationality, and color is ludicrous and offensive to God. Comparing the date on which a person is born with racial identity as the basis to discriminate turned out to be a very effective means to deliver a message denouncing racism.

Following the worship service, we walked out of the sanctuary into the Stillspeaking Theater to conduct the conversation. It became the model for a second forum on race held four months later in August. The second conversation was the first of five events for this project.

Sacred Conversation on Race and Racism in America II was held Saturday, August 16, 2008, at San Marino Congregational UCC in the Stillspeaking Theater.¹²³ A racially diverse group of about 50 participants traveled from San Diego, Riverside

¹²¹ Brian Ross and Rehab El-Buri, "Obama's Pastor: God Damn America, U.S. to Blame for 9/11," ABC News, March 13, 2008, <http://abcnews.go.com/blotter/story?id=4443788> (accessed March 8, 2009).

¹²² Gillian Flaccus, "Former San Diego Pastor's Move Brought Him to a Different World," Associated Press, San Diego, CA: San Diego Union Tribune, May 31, 2008, http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20080531/news_1c31cribbism.html (accessed March 8, 2009).

¹²³ See Appendix 6.

County, Torrance, Claremont, Glendale, Los Angeles, Pasadena, San Marino, and the West San Gabriel Valley for the discussion. Small talking groups were identified based on the months of birth. A facilitator was assigned to each one.

The facilitators were two medical doctors and an ordained clergy who had videotaped a conversation on race and religion. Their videotape was used throughout the day to spur discussions within the groups.

William Grier, MD, Rev. Dr. James Hargett, and Gordon Montgomery, MD, led the small group discussions which continued over lunch.¹²⁴ There were two plenary sessions to open and close the forum.¹²⁵ The closing plenary allowed all participants to share their personal stories and raise questions.¹²⁶

Event # 2: Public Safety Sunday

On September 14, 2008, San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ held its first “Public Safety Sunday.”¹²⁷ Firefighters and police officers, including chiefs and sheriffs, were invited to worship with us.¹²⁸ Letters were sent to every police department, fire department, and sheriff’s station from Glendale to Azusa and Altadena to Rosemead. September 14 was selected as the date for this event because it was the first Sunday following September 11.

Honoring the commemoration of public safety personnel who were injured or killed at the sites of the 9/11 tragedies, we wanted to express our appreciation to local law enforcement officers and firefighters. Police chiefs from Sierra Madre and San Marino attended along with police officers from their departments, Arcadia, El Monte, and

¹²⁴ See Appendix 7.

¹²⁵ See Appendix 8.

¹²⁶ See Appendix 9, 10, and 11.

¹²⁷ See Appendix 12.

¹²⁸ See Appendix 13.

Pasadena. San Marino's fire chief brought his complete staff. They were joined by firefighters from Arcadia and Pasadena.¹²⁹

Initially, there was some resistance within the congregation about dedicating a worship service to public safety. The primary concern was having an outside, non-clergy speaker. Also, some members felt it was important for the church to "showcase" its pastor and expose our visitors to a regular worship service. The guest speaker was my former supervisor from the California Department of Justice Police Officer Standards Training (POST) program.¹³⁰

Tom Anderson is a former San Francisco police officer who became a college professor and later formed the Justice Training Institute. Along with serving San Marino UCC as its pastor, I am an instructor of ethics with POST. Tom brought me to his team in 2000 while I was a pastor of Christian Fellowship Congregational Church, UCC, in San Diego, California.

Before he retired in 2006, Tom and I spent many days exchanging ideas and discussing social issues. He is committed to helping prepare law enforcement executives deal with the challenges associated with homeland security and public safety. During his speech to the congregation, he reminded us of civic responsibility and the role every citizen must play to maintain safe society.

"There are not enough police officers and sheriff's deputies to patrol every street in America," he said. He explained the importance of animal care and the critical role Animal Control officers play to protect pets and other creatures. While the purpose of Public Safety Sunday was to express gratitude and appreciation to men and women who put their lives on the line everyday, Tom expanded the occasion to challenge everyone in

¹²⁹ See Appendix 14.

¹³⁰ See Appendix 15.

the sanctuary to get more involved in civic life by getting to know public safety personnel on at least a first name basis.

“They are in your communities everyday. You should at least put a name on a face,” he said. “It doesn’t hurt for law enforcement officers to know you as well. We all depend on each other.”

The church successfully received local media coverage for the event. That was important for at least two reasons. It increased our outreach beyond persons who attended the worship service. Also, we were able to alert the wider community of our interest in civic affairs.

Public Safety Sunday was designed to bring “outsiders” into the sanctuary and to serve notice on the congregation that our ministries are extended beyond our walls.

San Marino has unique customs unlike our neighbors in the surrounding cities. For example, our building and design codes are so strict that windows in homes have to be approached by the Planning Commission and meet very specific regulations. The height of trees must fit a certain standard. Bicycles, roller blades, and other ‘wheeled’ toys cannot be ridden on city sidewalks.¹³¹ Also, non-residents must pay a user fee to go inside the public park on weekends.

It is not unusual for church members to concentrate on the affairs within the congregation without considering the integration of faith and civic life. Public liturgy provides opportunities to challenge the thinking of faithful churchgoers. Tom Anderson also was surprised by the warm embrace he and the public safety personnel received during the worship service.

¹³¹ San Marino, CA, City Codes, Traffic and Vehicles, Ch. 15, Sect. 15.01.01 (1990) http://www.cityofsanmarino.org/city_codes_chpt12_16.htm (accessed March 9, 2009).

We demonstrated how the “doors of the church open in and out.” Just as we are concerned about the spiritual welfare of every person, we are also engaged in the mundane and routine rigors of every day life. San Marino UCC is a welcoming community, yet there is more room for us to understand a deeper meaning of hospitality. Just as public liturgy is rooted in prayer and religious ritual in the Public Sphere, it is a manifestation of God’s affirmation of diversity and the multiplicity of talents resident among our neighbors.

Event #3: Forum on the Economy

One of the prominent families in our congregation faced foreclosure of their home as the nation’s economy was spiraling downward. “We aren’t sure what we are going to do,” the wife said calmly after Sunday morning worship. “We have told a few people and we thought we should let you know. We aren’t making it these days. It looks like we are going to have to move,” she continued.

As I listened to her words stagger from her mouth, my first thought was that she and her husband of more than 30 years were on the verge of divorce or separation. But, before that concern was able to form or settle, she announced, “We are going into foreclosure and we just can’t make our payments.” I slumped back in my chair at my office desk. A part of me felt relieved. The prospect of a loving and supportive couple breaking apart was jolting. Then, the urgency of her conversation boomerang and sent me in a spin of worry about their financial welfare.

“How can we help you?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I don’t think there is anything you can do. Pray for us,” she offered.

The conversation lasted less than five minutes, but the impact of her situation lingered. A few days later I contacted the Southern California Nevada Conference of the

United Church of Christ and talked with our interim Conference Minister Jane Fisler-Hoffman.

“Jane, what can we do to help people in our congregations who are hit with financial troubles in this economy?” I asked.

“That’s a good question,” Jane replied. “I’m not sure how we could proceed to put something in place that would be really helpful.”

That is how the idea of convening a community forum on the economy germinated. People in our pews were feeling the pinch of fewer dollars and higher costs. The churches were not set up to provide financial assistance of the magnitude crippling individuals and families. But, we had to do something to signal our sincere concern.

More phone calls to the United Church of Christ investment managers helped to give us some focus. Catherine Waterworth, chief investment officer of the UCC Pension Boards, suggested we pull together a panel of financial professionals. They could provide some understanding about how markets work and ways people could protect themselves by making wise decisions.

Without identifying anyone within our congregation who was going through an economic crisis, I went to the Church Council and Board of Trustees at San Marino UCC and got approval to hold a public forum on the economy. Everyone agreed it was a good step to address what was becoming an overwhelming situation.

Acknowledging my own deficiencies in the area of finance and economics, I turned to one of the stellar businesspersons in the San Marino area. Janice Lee is the estate director for Prudential California, a well-established realty agency in Pasadena. Janice was very generous in her response to my call. In fact, she expressed enthusiasm about the forum in our first conversation. She knew bankers, lenders, investment

managers, realtors, and psychologists. She was confident we could get enough professionals to work with us to make the forum a success.

My insistence that the event be held in the sanctuary of our church caused some initial tension. Janice had no religious affiliation and was not keen about having such a forum in a church sanctuary. She talked with members of the San Marino City Club, a civic organization that sponsored monthly public events. At least one of its members, Dennis Kneier, a member of the San Marino City Council and treasurer of the City Club, thought it would be better to hold the forum at the San Marino City Center.

The city center is located next door to the newly built Crowell Public Library. It has a seating capacity of more than 400. It is conveniently located on Huntington Drive with easy access to parking. Holding the forum there would have been easy, but it would not have conveyed a specific message: “The church is concerned about the issues many people are facing, including the economic crisis.”

After several more conversations, both Janice and Dennis allowed their thinking to shift and both supported holding the forum in our church sanctuary.

My second condition was to insure the panel included representatives from San Marino’s Asian residents. On Huntington Drive on the two-mile stretch of the City of San Marino there are at least ten banks. At least half of them are managed or owned by Chinese and Chinese-Americans.

We reached agreement on the place and composition of the event. To ease Janice and Dennis’ primary concern, I assured them the forum would not be a religious event. The sanctuary provided sufficient seating with excellent sound system. Janice and I worked out the details. She seated the panel and I took responsibility for the media and promotion of the event.

Members of our congregation became excited about the forum. They raised excellent questions about its purpose and if the church faced any liabilities if anyone sought financial advice. Some of them were skeptical about the congregation using the sanctuary for a secular, public gathering. After working our way through the issues that posed concern, the event was scheduled for October 16, 2008.

More than a hundred people turned out for the forum. Dr. Charles Weinstein, a psychologist, expanded the discussion beyond dollars and cents to address the emotional impact the economic crisis has on families. He offered clinical advice about maintaining a positive attitude by taking care of neighbors and others as each of us deals with our own financial situation.

Clive Hoffman and his daughter Jill, the public relations firm the church hired to assist in publicizing its activities, got involved immediately.¹³² Early announcements started to crop up on electronic billboards around the Greater Los Angeles Area. Three television stations covered the forum, including KCAL, KNBC, and KCBS.¹³³

¹³² See Appendix 18.

¹³³ Evening Newscasts, KCAL TV9, KNBC TV4, KCBS TV2, Los Angeles, CA, October 16, 2008.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The first forum was entitled, “Sacred Conversation on Race and Racism in America.” It was designed to bring people together from various ethnic and geographic communities for the purpose of discussing issues affecting race relations in Southern California, generally, and West San Gabriel Valley, specifically. In its role as public liturgy, this event created an environment in which participants were encouraged to share their stories and experiences of race and racism. This design made it possible for members to articulate their concerns for justice by working in small groups. It also provided an avenue for restorative practices to be employed. As a result, several persons expressed the unearthing of dormant pain they had harbored silently within themselves.

Talking about race and racism in America and the role religion has played to perpetuate bigotry and brutality against people of color caused people to deal with parts of their lives that they had tried to bury. They were forced to recall terrible and difficult periods in other parts of the country where they had left to escape social norms that discriminated against Blacks. However, once they were fully participating in the ‘Sacred Conversations’ in a safe place, they opened their mouths and told their stories. For some, it became a source of healing.

One member discussed his anxiety about coming to the event. He said it reminded him too much of his family life in the South. He didn’t want to re-visit that part of himself. A few days later his wife came to me and said she noticed how disturbed her husband had been immediately after the conversations, but he had finally opened up to talk about things that had been bothering him for many years. The events helped him to begin to heal. A few months later his brother came to spend time with him. They were together and able to say things that had been hidden inside them in the past.

The second event was built around 'Public Safety Sunday'. It was designed to commemorate the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and to honor law enforcement and firefighting personnel who dedicate their lives to public service. It also served to broaden the congregants' awareness about the role of church in the wider community and encourage members to become more interested and active in civic affairs. Within the context of a worship service, this event provided the opportunity for public safety workers to articulate concerns about people who have experienced tragedy. Through those testimonies, the congregation joined in showing compassion for others who suffer as well as first responders to a crisis. Concerns for justice and expressions of compassion from those gathered at this dedicated worship service reflect critical components of public liturgy.

The last activity of this project was called, "A Forum on the Economy." It included a panel of investment professionals and a psychologist to examine underlining conditions that resulted in the near collapse of the American economy. The magnitude of the financial crisis touched nearly every segment of society from lending institutions to young families. The local church demonstrated its concern for people who struggle to maintain a livelihood in the midst of economic uncertainty. In a materialistically-dominated community, San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ sought to provide an alternate perspective to the pervasive saturation of public commentary that potentially caused greater despair for persons who found themselves "under water" because of the shifting economic tide.

Nearly four months after the Forum on the Economy, several families in the congregation faced foreclosure on their homes. At least two members lost their jobs or had their positions and incomes substantially reduced. Salaries were frozen and they had to make adjustments in their lifestyles.

During a meeting of the Deacon Board, one person stood up and asked, “Are we here to maintain this building or to do ministry?” She asked her question after another member talked about the financial troubles he and his family were facing. The deacons began talking about the need for another forum. They felt it was important for the church to address the economic crisis and bring together credible experts in law, real estate, loan modification, and psychology. They referred back to the previous forum as a starting point that was a model to do something that would assist people who were losing control of their lives and homes.

A debate has started within the congregation about whether the events were intended to grow membership or provide a service to the community. While that is not resolved, since the three events took place and news coverage about the church reached across the Greater Los Angeles Area with a specific target on West San Gabriel Valley, the number of persons worshiping has not increased substantially. However, the diversity among people who come to the church has changed.

The San Marino City Club, an organization for local residents and businesspeople, meets monthly. Since the church conducted its three events, someone comes up to me at every meeting and asks about the church, its theater, and inquires about our plans for future events.

Moving the congregation into public life has begun to make the church more visible in the community. Hiring media professionals to promote activities of the church increased our capacity to reach people who never stepped inside the sanctuary. San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ has become transitional, if not transformative, in a social milieu where the expectation is that people of faith marginalize their lives by keeping religion separate from political and public concerns. The church

accepts itself as a center which is open, inclusive and hospitable to others, even persons who find themselves on the edges.

When the Church Council approved the three events that were part of this project, it was not an easy burden. The concepts were new. People were asked to invite politicians, money lenders, and police officers into the sanctuary in their professional capacity, including uniforms. It was hard for some members to imagine worshiping with cops who had guns in the sanctuary.

However, since these experiences with public liturgy, there are indications this project is having an effect within the congregation. The Deacon Board has made plans to sponsor another forum on the economy, and, in a separate action, the Trustee Board created a new church account and allocated money for the Pastor's Emergency Fund. That money will be used to assist individuals and families who have been affected by the economic downturn.

Also, the church voted to maintain a high level of financial support for the Wider Ministries of the United Church of Christ during a period of financial hardships and uncertainty. Discussions about how the church could be more directly involved in coming to the aid of others and the denomination were directly related to organizing and assessing activities associated with this project.

Leadership for future events is coming from the laity. They have begun to identify resources to hold a series of meetings to address the economy; and some people are talking about ways to raise money from yard sales and other activities to provide support for families in financial trouble. Instead of looking inward, the congregation is going beyond the sanctuary to become more connected to people, including those who never walk into the doors of the church.

Throughout this project, we have examined patterns of public engagement within two local United Church of Christ congregations, Christian Fellowship Congregational Church in San Diego and San Marino Congregational Church. The three events were designed to transform secular and sacred spaces into venues where faithful acts of witnessing to God's love for all people could be highlighted. These encounters served to cultivate and articulate concerns for justice and demonstrate compassion and solidarity with others through spiritual, meditative, and restorative practices.

We are reminded of global events that are recorded in history and emulated around the world can begin in local settings where Christians re-interpreted the Gospel, join other faith traditions, make a paradigm shift, and help to inspire sufficient courage so others will forge a path that leads from the sanctuary to the streets. That is what public liturgy, ultimately, is all about.

Epilogue

This project began in response to people I have met over the past twenty years in countries I've visited. In fact, I have traveled to more than 25 nations as a journalist and an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.

I was introduced to public liturgy as a way to "have church" outdoors by a Rev. Park in Seoul, Korea. The day I met Rev. Park, his congregation had been holding their Sunday morning worship services on the streets outside a precinct police station. Five years earlier, there had been a break-in at Rev. Park's church. According to Rev. Park, the police were called but they did not respond. After complaints had been filed against the police for failing to investigate the crime, Rev. Park instructed members of his church to go to the police station and stand outside.

The Rev. Frank Chikane, an outspoken critic of South Africa's apartheid government, was the preacher on the Sunday morning I attended Rev. Park's church. Frank and I were in Seoul as delegates to the World Council of Churches' convocation on 'Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation'.

That Sunday morning in March 1990, a severe rain storm swept across Seoul. The torrential downpour sent water flowing through the streets. Make-shift coverings protected the church's musical instruments and sound system. Members of the congregation filled the street as they worshiped in a complete service. Rev. Park explained since the police would not go to the church, the church would go to the police. Every Sunday church services were held in front of the police station, even in the wet, bitter cold.

As a Southern Californian who was familiar with "rainy day schedules," I could not help but think about school children in Los Angeles remaining in their classrooms when the weather turns misty, and motorists having a difficult time negotiating slippery

roadways. I was very impressed by the assembly of devout church-goers standing outside in the rain to sing, pray, and hear a dynamic sermon on a rainy Sunday in Seoul.

The experience also reminded me of the dedication sports fans have for their favorite professional teams. Football stadiums are filled every Sunday across the United States in the 'dead cold of winter' as people travel great distances to watch grown men play kid games.

I will never forget one game in Chicago at Soldier Field when snow fell so densely, spectators in the stands could not see the game. But, they were there in their seats as their teams battled on the gridiron.

Fair-weather people of faith are sometimes deterred by heavy weather and take those occasions to remain home in the warmth of a fireplace or a brain-numbing television program. There are lessons we can learn from our Christian sisters and brothers in Korea.

Walking with missionaries in Taiwan who worked with international fishers who traveled far from their homelands to support their families, I heard stories of threats and abuse they suffered at the command of ship captains who held their crew captive aboard their vessels. From the loading docks in Kaohsiung, Filipino fishermen called to us and said they had no money or documents. They could not get off the ships. They asked us to tell their stories.

In the homes of indigenous Taiwanese fishers, mothers and wives worried about the safety of their sons and husbands. They did not know when their loved ones would return home. They did not know where they were.

However, there were two families who did know exactly where their men were at the time we met the wives. Their husbands were locked up in the Snohomish County Jail in Everett, Washington.

The two men were part of a fishing crew that had been working along the coast of Washington State when their ships were seized by the United States Coast Guard. Working under contract for a Japanese fishing firm, they were ordered by the company to use gill nets to haul in their catch of fish.

There had been an international dispute about the use of certain gear that threatened the ecology and reduced the supply of marine species. In an apparent violation of international laws, the men were arrested and held in the county jail to await trial.

Their wives received word of their situation but did not know anything about their health or legal status. They asked me to visit their husbands and report my findings back to them. That was my first “reporting” assignment as a minister and not as a journalist.

Upon my return to the United States, I went immediately to the Snohomish County Jail and met with the fishers. Talking through a translator, they told me their story and assured me they were healthy. Their only complaint was the food served in the jail was extremely different from what they were used to eating back home. The men remained in jail at least six months after our visit before they were released and returned to Taiwan.

That experience was the beginning of a new journey for me. The effect of my travels caused me to see the world as a complex place with diverse realities. People have similar basic needs with a great desire to tell their stories. I discovered every location and situation has a connection to people in places separated by large bodies of water and land.

There are people and conditions somewhere that remind me of other people living under the same conditions in another part of the world. I also learned language is not a serious barrier to forming lasting friendships. In fact, the less we talk sometimes, the

more we are able to strive and get along together. Food and music are great conduits to facilitate communication.

Leaving overseas ministry and serving two congregations in Southern California exploded my parochial perceptions of pastoral ministry. Middle class Caucasians who worship in an affluent, suburban community have many of the same concerns as upper income African Americans who worship in a middle class church in an urban neighborhood.

Both sets of congregants are worried about their adult children and elderly parents. They are uncertain about the economy and its impact on their pensions. They fear violence is an epidemic that threatens civility.

They are marginally literate about the Bible and the teaching ministry of Jesus. They are more “spiritual” than “religious.” They are searching for the appropriate place to connect their faith with their political and social lives. Identity and location often blur as they travel daily from their homes to work across city limits that put them in contact with a variety of people who do not share their values or world perspectives.

In both congregations, my ministry was supported, challenged, and expanded by individuals who desired to see their church and pastor have a more relevant place in society. They prodded me to preach on the cutting edge and to represent the congregation at public events.

Southern California is a microcosm of a larger universe. People have arrived from every continent. They have brought their cultures, traditions, hopes, and ambitions to a place that is relatively tolerant of differences. Although there are vicious assaults on undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Latin America, millions of people continue to make their way by risking their lives across deserts and over mountains to reach El Norte. They bring skills, music, foods, languages, religious convictions, and a daring,

undaunted hope that their journeys will glean provisions to support their families back home.

Those are the elements that inspired this project. The local church is the center of change where spiritual guidance sharpens the focus of social justice. Blacks and whites, rich and poor, gays and straights, men and women, adults and children, urban and suburban residents can make a contribution to improve the quality of life for everyone who struggles for justice (see Figure 7.1). God's unfailing love gives us power to act and reflect the "loving image of God" that is found in the sacred gift that is every human being.



Figure 7.1 Interfaith March for Immigrant Rights along USA-Mexico Border, 2006.

Public liturgy is a powerful way to make worship a part of people's lives who otherwise would not attend a church service. It gives the faith community heft in situations where social and political activists often dominate. In order for public liturgy to have greater reach beyond the persons who participate, it is important for the organizers to develop an effective media strategy. The Civil Rights Movement had very

limited impact until CBS television, Jet and Life magazines started covering marches and acts of civil disobedience.

News coverage will happen when people of faith involved themselves in the critical issues affecting families and neighborhoods outside their sanctuaries. All activities are local even when they have a national or global focus. News events take place in locations of local settings. When the media show up at a public worship service where praying, singing, and proclaiming the Good News take place, more people are exposed to the relevant presence of faith in the Public Square.

This project has identified and examined the role individuals have played to push two local church congregations out of the pews and into streets. During the eight years I served as pastor in San Diego and the two years I have been in San Marino, every time people of faith gather outside the sanctuary or invite public figures and local business people to come inside the church walls to address difficult issues people are facing, the result has been surprising joy.

Public liturgy happens whenever people are intentional about making their faith an integral fabric in the social, political, and real affairs that burden the lives of people within the service area of the local church.

Appendix 1

"Saying Thanks in Tough Times"

Some years ago, Father Michael Kennedy, a Roman Catholic priest in Los Angeles, traveled numerous times to the war-torn country of El Salvador. On one trip he visited a community where all the men had been murdered: fathers, uncles, sons, brothers, neighbors, and nephews were all killed. Only the women survived.

Upon his return to the United States, Father Mike wrote a reflection piece in the Los Angeles Times. He was profoundly and forever touched by the faith and hope of those women he had met. He wrote about how they had suffered the loss of their men and had to fend for themselves amid such horror and tragedy. Yet, they remained grateful to God for life and still believed peace was possible. They retained an attitude of thanksgiving and gratitude even in tough times.

Now, many of us are accustomed to offering words of appreciation and thanks when times are good and things are going well. I usually find it easy to feel grateful when gifts are exchanged and kind words are spoken. Even in the aftermath of a difficult situation, I am able to offer a prayer of thanksgiving: thankful for getting through to the other side of bad times. But what about tough times? How do we say "thanks" when trouble surrounds us and uncertainty fills our mind and space?

Recently, I was in a circle praying with a group of people in a park in San Diego. I was very fortunate to have been standing between two young women from Sudan. As we held hands and offered our prayers aloud, I felt the deep wrenching that gripped their bodies, causing both of them to tremble as they spoke. What moved me most were the words of their prayers.

The older of the two women who stood on my left prayed first. And then she said it. "Thank you, God, for the suffering of my people. Thank you for the hurt we have known. Thank you for the long journey from war to refugee camps, and now to this place. Thank you for the pain we feel leaving our families behind and not knowing their fate; not knowing whether they are dead or alive."

Her prayer continued like that as she shared a very deep faith in a loving and present God whom she gave thanks through her tough times. I had expected another kind of prayer. Perhaps one that was more familiar like praying for the protection of her family or the end to the war, violence and death among her Sudanese countrymen. Instead, she prayed and I heard words of thankfulness in the midst of tough times.

In Psalm 22, we hear David praying to God amid his own agony. Jesus offered that same prayer of David from the cross when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" Inherent in their prayers is the awareness of God's presence with them. Although they felt a sense of temporary abandonment, they still called out to God with confidence that God hears and knows their suffering.

It is that awareness that sustains, strengthens, and makes possible our victory over unbearable and, seemingly, impossible circumstances. David and Jesus both expressed the very core of their faith, as they knew God listens, feels, and knows our tough times. More than that, God shares and delivers us through and beyond our fears and loneliness.

Now, this is not to trivialize, minimize or even deny tough times. It is not to say we should pretend tough times don't exist. Rather, in the midst of difficulty when the outcome is not certain, we engage completely what is actually happening, but we do so with open expression of thankfulness and gratitude.

Gratitude during tough times means naming and identifying what we are experiencing. We must name and call out our concerns and our issues. And when we

Speak the word that is bothering us, we gain power and control through God's grace. There is no denial when we say exactly what is going on and who is involved. After we name it, we discover the practical side of Jesus' teachings about love and forgiveness. The only true antidote to fear is love.

Often, fear is the thing that drives and fuels our tough times. We can overcome our fear with love. Through love we can muster the courage to forgive even those persons who cause us to face tough times. Forgiveness puts a human face on our condition. It makes room for us to retain our humanity even as we affirm and validate the humanity of the person who is hurting us.

When we do just that, everything changes starting with our attitude. And, we do one other thing as we pray to God, we express gratitude to and for the other person. Instead of seeking revenge or petitioning God to hurt the one who is hurting us, we lift up a prayer of appreciation for being alive and aware. We pray for the care and welfare of every person, even the one who is causing us harm.

This is what Paul tells us in Romans 12:20 where he says "...you will be heaping coals of fire on his head." In other words he will feel ashamed of himself for what he has done to you.

Being thankful is not only reserved for good times in our lives. Our true power comes when we give thanks for all circumstances, including tough times. The amazing grace of God is that gratitude shifts perspective. We see, feel, and experience things quite differently when we authentically and openly say, "Thank you" in tough times.

I have a pain in my lower back. Doctors have told me I will stay with me for the rest of my life. It is a pain for which I give thanks. It reminds me of the night I went through a windshield in a head-on automobile collision in Nigeria, West Africa. For a long time whenever I closed my eyes I could see the flash of bright lights and I could hear the crashing sound of metal from those cars.

The pain in my back reminds me I am still alive after that accident on the highway between Ibadan and Lagos commonly known as "Blood Alley." I thank God for the pain and the moment that separated my past from the new life since that eventful evening. Saying "thanks" in tough times is not easy but it is always necessary.

Now, the second young woman from Sudan who prayed in that circle in the park also stirred my soul and helped to sharpen my faith. Her voice was so soft and gentle as to be barely heard even less than a foot away from her. But, her eloquence and fervor could not be missed.

She, too, prayed her prayer of thanks for the trials and tribulations of her life. She knew war, death, violence, and deep hurt. She knew displacement and starting over in a very different and distant place. And, yet, she said thank you in her tough times. Her prayer of thanksgiving touched everyone in that circle. She connected all of us to her and to her God. We witnessed the maturity of her faith as she prayed. Yes, gratitude is powerful. It is healing and it is renewing. We are forever changed and never the same for having heard her pray a word of thanks in tough times.

Anyone who has spent a single moment with any modicum of awareness through these dangerous and difficult days knows there are many things that distract us and keep us off-balance. We are reminded everyday of the problems in the world. There are wars, famine, storms, addiction, unemployment, broken families, deployment to foreign lands, displacement, financial insecurity, and illness. And the lists of woe go on and on.

The toll of life is exact and often harsh. It is in these very tough times that we need to give thanks to God. Also, we must learn to say thank you to people in our lives, even those who appear invisible like housekeepers in hotels, offices, hospitals and

schools. We must share our gratitude with people who make things right through their labor and good will. It is not enough just to say thank you to God unless we also thank our sisters and brothers.

That attitude of gratitude gives us clarity, it gives us courage and faith to go on and live more abundantly and fully. Through our prayers of thanksgiving new hope is shared and community is formed. We see ourselves in the company of others who also know the challenges and opportunities of tough times. We sense the presence of God with us through tough times. The Apostle Paul reminds us to pray without ceasing...to pray at all times. When times are good and when times are tough.

I say to you yes, pray. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving and be grateful no matter what is going on. Find the words and know the depths of gratitude that empowers you to say thanks in tough times. Amen.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Arthur Cribbs, "Saying 'Thanks' in Tough Times," sermon, Chicago Sunday Evening Club, WTTW-TV, Chicago, IL, November 27, 2005.

Appendix 2

Interview with Art Cribbs

Lydia Talbot: Art, an earlier time you were on this program you told us that you started every day of your life with a mantra of gratitude. Can you say it for us now?

Art Cribbs: Sure. "No matter what happens today, I'm going to practice gratitude and joy because God is the source of my life." And that's my mantra. It continues even to this moment.

Delle Chatman: That's beautiful and simple. And it's a thank you for life itself.

Cribbs: Well, I need to say it, you know, because things get tough and we have these surprises—uninvited, unwelcomed surprises—and yet through it all we have to remember that something far greater than our knowing, our understanding, is in charge of everything. And what seems to be a tough moment and perhaps is a tough moment, may be a preparatory moment for something better. So I'm giving thanks for, yeah, it's painful, it's disappointing, but I still believe the God who loves me is in charge of that moment where I'm facing disappointment. So no matter what happens I practice it.

Talbot: Has there been something particularly painful or tough that you've been able to say those words, "Thank you, God" for?

Cribbs: The loss of a first cousin.

Chatman: And the accident, for one thing.

Cribbs: The accident a few years ago. You know, what was interesting about the accident—and this was before the mantra was a part of my life—I'll always remember sitting in the front seat of this vehicle on the highway between Ibadan and Lagos and seeing the light and then suddenly hearing the crash and my body goes limp and something says, "Relax. Relax." And I'm saying, "Yeah, but I could die here!" And it says, "But you're in Africa. You're at home. Relax!"

Talbot: You mentioned a cousin?

Cribbs: Yes. I've had several cousins die in rapid succession. People who are very close to us. We had a family reunion, we were all together, and within a few months of that each of them, young men, passed away. Those are difficult moments. I'm not celebrating the fact that they died, but I'm celebrating the fact that we had family time together and now a memory of them.

Chatman: I want to go back to this voice that spoke to you in the midst of this accident because I think it's kind of key to what you're getting at; that in the midst of our suffering God is there. We're never without him. And we have, as Christians, a suffering Lord. We have someone who has actually gone through horrific suffering himself so we have a tie to God that is physical and visceral and emotional. He's experienced loneliness and alienation. As you said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Can you talk a

little bit about how it feels to find God in the midst of a moment of excruciating pain?

Cribbs: You know, I am so thankful that David penned those words in Psalm 22—at least we attribute it to David—because we often jump right over to Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” But when David pens in the midst of his own agony this sense of abandonment, “My God, my God, where are you? Why have you forsaken me?” And then Jesus cries out from the cross, right? There are times in our lives when we do not feel the presence of God. We do feel abandoned. We feel alone. We don’t feel family cares about us. We don’t feel the nation cares about us. We ask, “Well, who cares about me?” And there is Jesus on the cross saying, “Where are you God? Abba, Abba, where are you, Father? Where are you, Dad? Where are you?” So I think it’s important for us even in those times when it feels like we are abandoned and we’re alone to call again. Call out again. Call out again.

Talbot: Are you calling out again right now, Delle? Our Delle has struggled, as our audience knows.

Chatman: I have a war going on with cancer. And we’ve been fighting, getting down on it for about three years now. And I’m really struck, given my own experience of that fight, with what you’ve said about this sense of being forsaken, but also how it is important to still cry out. And then, to me, surrender is important. In that thank you, before you get to thank you, there is a relaxation. There is, “Lord, I’m yours!”

Talbot: Dietrich Bonhoeffer talks about grace. He spends a lot of time talking about grace. And he makes a distinction between “cheap” grace and “costly” grace. And I think the same is true with gratitude. I don’t want to just be going around saying thank you and being flippant about that and ignoring what life brings us in that encounter.

Cribbs: I have a wonderful friend, my daughter’s godfather, who was diagnosed with lung and brain cancer. And he said—and fortunately it is in remission and he is nine years past that diagnosis—in the midst of it he discovered how wonderful life is. He says the worst thing about cancer is knowing that you have it. But when you know you have it and you begin to pay attention to life, it’s not that bad because suddenly you’re now paying attention to things that before he had been taking for granted. I don’t want to trivialize that, but he gives me inspiration as I hear him say that.

Talbot: And the knowledge that others, Delle, are praying for you is a critical part of the healing process.

Chatman: And something else to be grateful for because many times the prayers of other people are all you can fall back on in moments that are full of despair and, as you said, uncertainty and pain and looking forward to the future that all of a sudden is clouded with...well, you don’t even know what, but you just dread, just absolutely dread. But I’ve found that in moments like that I could be thankful for the people who took care of me, the nursing assistants that walked in and handled me with tender loving care, the nurses who paid attention to my needs, the doctors who were using their best knowledge, their best wisdom to take care of me, even in the most desperate circumstances there is cause for the expression of gratitude. And that keeps this spirit afloat.

Talbot: And the beautiful attitude of your beautiful little girl, Ramona, who is ten.

Chatman: Ten going on twenty!

Talbot: Tell us what she said recently about being the child of a mother who has illness.

Chatman: Well, she had an opportunity to make a presentation in front of a large audience and she talked about how the challenge of having a parent who is really, really sick really creates a lot of fear in a child, a lot of anger in a child, and a lot of loneliness. She said, "I know how lonely you feel," she said speaking to other kids in circumstances like hers. "But, God can see you through. God can see you through." And I give thanks for her faith! That it's there for her.

Cribbs: You know, it's an opportunity for us to encourage each other. So many people are going through so many things: displacement, loss of home, loss of family, deployment to places, loss of jobs. So much, right? We are living through much uncertainty, but if we are able to say thank you and then sit back and listen. Just listen. It becomes a new source of power, a new source of inspiration. And I think that's where God gives us the great gift of each other. Over and over again, God is saying, "I love you. Now I want you to do one thing for me: love each other, take care of each other, inspire, encourage each other." Because we are all going through something that seems like it's bigger than ourselves, bigger than the moment.

Talbot: How do you teach that to your children?

Cribbs: You know what? They are teaching it to me because most of the time our children are paying attention to what's really essential and they are so forgiving and their memory is so short.

Chatman: That's very true.

Cribbs: They are the teachers. That's why a child shall lead us, because our children are teaching us how to be most human, most compassionate and always thankful.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ "Giving Thanks in Tough Times," 30 Good Minutes, prod. Lydia Talbot and Delle Chatman, Chicago, IL: WTTW-TV, November 27, 2005, http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/Cribbs_4909.htm (accessed November 29, 2008).

Appendix 3

"The Greatest of These"

If ever there was a time when we needed prayer now is that time. For our faith to have meaning and power, we must practice the discipline of prayer. Prayer is the essential key to connect us to God. It is the inescapable path toward the completion of our existence. It ties us to every human being throughout time.

So, what is prayer and why is it so important? In every significant religious tradition there is a ritual of prayer. Whether it is called meditation, concentration, talking to God, or mindfulness, prayer in some form is absolute wherever and whenever people seek the higher, Ultimate Cause of our being. But, prayer is more than the mere conversation with God. Whether contemplative, meditative, spontaneous, rehearsed, open or private, prayer is what joins us to a cosmic symphony of Universal Force beyond the realm of our singular place in life.

At its root, prayer is the sacred gift of communion with every life form. In silence, we listen attentively to the sounds of Creation. We hear the chorus of celestial voices singing praises. We hear our own breath moving rhythmically in and out in concert with the constant flow of our bio-system. More than that, we become one in mental, spiritual, emotional and human awareness of the grandeur that is God.

Prayer goes past the dimensions of time and space. And, yet, prayer is even more than the poetic imagery that congers a minute appreciation of its special qualities. Prayer possesses the power to create new realities and perceptions. Prayer changes the course of life and death. The Scriptures are filled with episodes where prayer transformed incredible situations into unbelievable opportunities.

There was Moses standing on the verge of hopelessness and seeming defeat when he spoke the Word, stretched out his rod and the waters parted. What a magnificent moment for the desperate people of faith to have the power of prayer revealed in front of them.

Jesus goes away into the mountains, the desert, along the sea shore, and into the garden in search of quietness to pray. Among the crowds he offers prayer and brings healing to the sick, sight to the blind, hope to the forsaken, and life to the dead. And, now, even in our times, we are required to reclaim the magnificence of prayer.

Sometimes we may think prayer is a weak substitute for strategic action. We may feel prayer is what you do when you can do nothing else. Let me assure you that we can do nothing without prayer. It is the greatest offering we can share when someone is in pain, desperate or alone. There is nothing within our grasp that can be achieved without prayer. Someone somewhere is praying for you and me right now.

I am a living witness that prayer works. When I was a small boy my grandmother prayed for me at a moment of critical illness. She feared I was near death. She not only prayed for me, but she got on the telephone and dialed a prayer line in Los Angeles. I am here today because God answers prayer.

If our faith is to have meaning at all, we must understand our purpose as making a critical difference in the world. As people of faith we should be considered dangerous and a threat to every system and instrument of injustice, destruction, and human alienation.

Whenever and wherever efforts are forged to divide humanity and wage war, we should be driven to declare God's will. We are called to remind the powers-that-be that we are divinely ordained to live in peace with justice for all; we are called to be makers of peace. In order to have courage to take bold, unpopular positions, we need a well-

developed practice of prayer. In order to act appropriately and not just emotionally, we need a clear line of communication with God. Prayer makes the difference when disaster is imminent. We are on a collision course with unthinkable consequences. We need prayer.

The Apostle Paul instructed us to pray without ceasing. We need non-stop prayer right now. But, it is not enough to just call out to God with an expectation our cries will be heard and God will answer. Remember Solomon's prayer when he dedicated the temple in Jerusalem, and God responded. In Second Chronicles, chapter 7, God says: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice.

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Responsibility and accountability come with prayer. It is what gives us purpose, vision and salvation. Today, we need prayer because so much of the world has turned a deaf ear to life and hope. Violence is rampant and national leadership is flawed. We need to turn the world around. We need to turn the world upside down.

Suffering is felt deeply yet goes unattended. Those who have known suffering too often side with oppressive forces rather than defend those who suffer. Instead of witnessing for a better way toward reconciliation and improved human relationships, too many people have chosen to perpetuate war, retaliation, and broken treaties. Yes, we need prayer today.

Too many of us have forgotten what the Prophet said in Isaiah 61: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

We ignore the clear and unambiguous teachings of Jesus as found in St. Luke, chapter 6. Jesus says: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you."

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans as found in Romans, chapter 12 is equally clear. Paul says: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

I tell you in order for us to do any of these things today we need a well disciplined life and practice of prayer. The condition of the world is too severe to limit our prayers only to ourselves and our own desires. We need prayer to make significant changes in attitude and conditions. We need prayer to give us courage to be faithful and obedient to God; to follow the teachings of Jesus; to live in ways that encourage others.

Throughout the world people are looking for the faith community to take a stand for peace and justice. People are suffering. Flames of war and violence are being fanned and we need the cooling presence of prayer to douse the anger. Only prayer is the way toward new understanding and compassion.

Today, I am praying for courage and greater compassion. I pray to be peace in the face of loud, rampant shouts for war and violence. I pray to faithfully and obediently follow the Word of God; to bring hope and healing. I am praying for new global leadership that is compassionate and has vision. And, I pray that we will be a more humble people, who confess our sins, pray, seek God's face, and turn away from wickedness, so that God's promise to Solomon will be fulfilled in our time; that God will hear our prayers, forgive our mistakes, and heal our land. Amen. ¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Arthur Cribbs, "Prayer: Connecting to the Divine Presence," sermon, Chicago Sunday Evening Club, WTTW-TV, Chicago, IL, August 31, 2004.

Appendix 4



Faith Leaders for Peace Coalition for Peace in Iraq Platform Statement

March 20, 2006, marks the third anniversary of the United States invasion of Iraq. We believe as religious leaders of many faiths in San Diego, we need to speak with a common voice for peace.

Our various faith traditions insist that violence and war are a last resort and the war in Iraq cannot be called a just war. The war creates widows and orphans here and in Iraq, increases the risk of terrorism worldwide, and devours resources desperately needed for social justice programs. Additionally, we are distressed that a clear plan for effectively concluding the conflict has not been made public.

Therefore, we the undersigned religious leaders unite in the following statement of purpose to motivate us and many of our congregants to speak with one voice grounded in the moral authority of our diverse communities of faith:

- First, the United States should begin a phased decrease in numbers of military forces in Iraq.
- Second, the Federal Administration should formally and unequivocally declare that the United States will not maintain a permanent military presence or military bases in Iraq.
- Third, the Administration should take concrete steps to gather increased international support toward concluding the conflict, and support United Nations' efforts to provide security for the citizens of Iraq.

Anabaptist–UCC

Rev. Vernon Mitchell

Astara

Jill S. Porter

Buddhist

Karma Lekshe Tsomo

Marshall White

Church of the

Brethren

Rev. Sara Haldeman-Scarr

Congregational

Rev. Wayne Riggs

Disciples of Christ

Rev. Tim Tiffany

Rev. David Downing

Federation of

Christian Ministries

Rev. Dr. Daniel Meyer

Islam

Imam Taha Hassane

Presbyterian

Rev. Lee Van Ham

Rev. Robert Plimpton

Episcopalian

The Rev. Dorothy

Curry

The Rev. Canon Joan

Butler Ford

The Rev. William

Mahedy

The Rev. Canon

Andrew Rank, SSP

The Very Rev. Scott

Richardson

The Rev. Canon

Allisyn Thomas

The Rev. Canon

Richard Lief

Imam Wali Fardan

Jewish

Rabbi Laurie Coskey,

Ed.D.

Roman Catholic

Rev. Robert A.

Fambrini, S.J.

The Rev. Canon Mary

Moreno Richardson

The Rev. Nancy Nagy

The Rev. Dr. Alex

Nagy

The Rev. Canon

Barnabas Hunt

The Reverend

Maryanne Lacey

The Rev. Canon Lee

B. Teed

Rev. Julia Christian

The Rev. Brent Carey

Rabbi Jeffrey

Lipschultz

Rabbi Alexis Pearce

Rabbi Ben Kamin

Cantor Kathy Robbins

Rosemary Johnston

Rev. Michael

Ratajczak

Sr. Maureen Brown,
CSJ
Rev. Henry
Rodriguez, Jr.
Mark Schroeder
O.F.M
Rev. Dominic DeLay,
O.P.

**Religious Society of
Friends**

Judy Leshefka

Sufi Interfaith

Rev. Dr. Sharon G.

Mijares

Rev. Dr. Merle Lehman ¹³⁷

**United Church of
Christ**

Rev. Arthur Cribbs

Rev. Scott Landis

Rev. Glenn Larsen

Rev. Bonnie Tarwater

Rev. Donna Lindsey

Rev. Felix Villanueva

Rev. Madison

Shockley

Rev. Sheila Naismith

Unitarian

Universalist

Rev. Jim Grant ¹³⁵

Fred L. Hammond

Rev. Beth Johnson
Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-
Towle
Rev. Carol Hilton
Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube
Rev. Julie Kain
Rev. Ned Wight
Rev. Frank Willey

United Methodist

Rev. Randa D'Aoust

Rev. Nancy Goyings

Rev. Lynne Austin

¹³⁷ "Faith Leaders for Peace Coalition for Peace in Iraq Platform Statement," Green Bird Media, San Diego, CA: 2007, <http://www.flfpeace.org/2-platform.htm> (accessed November 27, 2008).

Appendix 5

Prayer parade targets politicians

By Kristen Green
STAFF WRITER

August 11, 2005

Fifteen minutes before the start of the prayer parade he organized yesterday, Pastor Art Cribbs stood outside City Hall filling purple balloons with helium.

A believer in the power of prayer, Cribbs said he awoke one recent morning with the strong feeling that he should plan a public prayer vigil.

"We all know about the scandal and the fiscal crisis that the city of San Diego faces. But I think there's something much deeper," said Cribbs, who preaches at Christian Fellowship United Church of Christ in Emerald Hills. "We've lost our compass."

As pastors and religious leaders from churches around San Diego County gathered in the breezeway in front of the City Hall entrance, television cameras surrounded them as they explained their vision for the parade.

They would walk from City Hall to the county Hall of Justice, then on to the state building and the federal courthouse. They were praying about the "flawed leadership of the nation" and asking God to help politicians put people above profits.

"Ultimately, we're praying for the world," Cribbs said.

Council member Tony Young appeared in the breezeway 20 minutes into the event. Five people placed their hands on Young's back as Pastor Robert Ard of Golden Hill's Christ Church of San Diego asked God to grant him courage and to help him stay mindful of the needs of the people he serves.

Young, who returned to City Hall without joining in the parade, said he is prayed for all the time.

"There is no other way for me to be able to survive all this stuff than through prayer," he said. "I need this. I really do."

Cribbs trailed the group of pastors and church members marching along Broadway to the Hall of Justice. As he walked, the eight balloons he carried hit passers-by in the head.



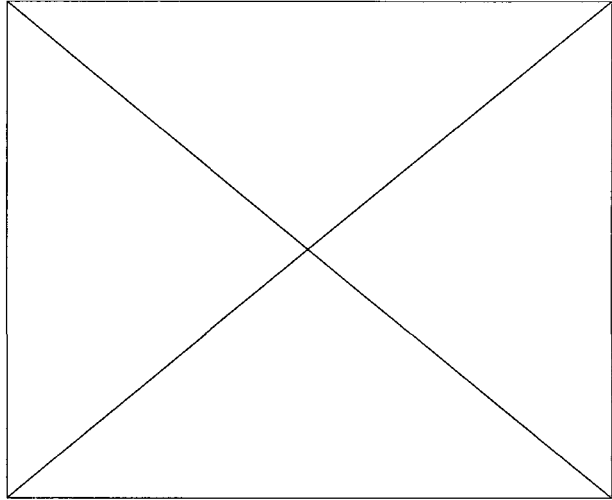
RONI GALGANO / Union-Tribune

Members gathering at City Hall for a prayer parade offered a petition for Councilman Tony Young before they embarked on their march yesterday to other public buildings downtown.

At the courthouse, parade participants stood on the steps, holding a sign reading, "Parade of Prayer," while others gathered on the sidewalk.

Jurors and lawyers avoided the demonstration by veering onto the street, and some paused on the sidewalk to listen to the prayers being recited through a megaphone. A minister offered a prayer in Spanish and a Muslim offered one in Arabic.

Rev. Felix Villanueva, who preaches at United Church of Christ of La Mesa, prayed that God's justice would prevail in the courts.



Shelia Jackson, a member of the San Diego Unified school board, joined in the parade at the county building and dropped off before the state building. Jackson said she she thinks people will become more involved in government through their prayers.

At the state building on Front Street, the crowd grew to 100 people, as the pastors prayed for the government to create more humane immigration policies, pointing out that 366 migrants have died this year along the southwest border.

On the way to the federal courthouse on Broadway, where the crowd dwindled to 40, Emma Turner, a Spring Valley mother who brought her two daughters along, said the group had given its politicians what the people believed they need – prayer. That is the best they have to offer, she said.

"Anything you want to change or make a difference, you need to bring attention to," Turner said. "That's all this is." ¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Kristen Green, "Prayer Parade Targets Politicians." San Diego Union Tribune, August 11, 2005, http://www.uniontrib.com/uniontrib/20050811/news_7m11pray.html (accessed March 9, 2009).

Appendix 6

SACRED CONVERSATION II **Race and Religion in America**

San Marino Congregational UCC
Saturday, August 16, 2008
10: A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Program

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 10:00 | Opening
Welcome
Prayer
Introductions |
| 10:10 | Video I – <i>Jesus Christ, Son of God</i>
Sacred Conversations with featured guests |
| 11:05 | Video II – <i>God of Suffering Peoples</i>
Sacred Conversations with featured guests |
| 12:00 | LUNCH and Table Conversations |
| 12:30 | Video III – <i>Another God</i>
Sacred Conversations with featured guests |
| 1:15 | Video IV – <i>God and Racial Identity</i>

Panel Discussion and Q & A |
| 2:00 | Closing |

Featured Guests

William “Bill” Grier, MD
James Hester Hargett, DD
Gordon Montgomery, MD

Appendix 7

Segment from DVD, *Another God: Race and Religion in America*®

Grier: *This is the very point that troubles me. I would like to believe that there are good men and women who lived and died as polytheists and I know very well that there are wicked men and women who have lived and died as Christians, so I don't know that one set of beliefs necessarily endows a person with goodness or condemns another to wickedness and the consequences.*

Hargett: *Well, I think we are as earthlings blessed with all those sincere efforts to understand the meaning and nature of God. I think various cultures and traditions constituted fertile ground for one concept to prevail over against another concept. As we move towards globalism in its many forms—for example in the New York Times this week, I read about the incredible growth of Christianity in China. It is an incredible development and not a growth that is a product of an invasion of missionaries, but a growth that has its own evangelical, its own impetus, its own meaning, and it's a very dramatic development. Now, all these years Christian missionaries have gone from the United States to China and have had limited success in converting the Chinese people to Christianity. Now all of a sudden, a mystery is evolving in China. I place along side that mystery the mystery of China's geometric increase in its industrialization, and now it is about to surpass the US, the one nation that threatens in this area in terms of global capitalism. So you have the growth of Christianity on the one hand and the growth of capitalism on the other. Asia, I think, will become the center again. When we read our Scripture, we realize how the Middle East or Asia as it were, played such a major role in the primitive stages of our faith's development. Now all of a sudden we've gone full cycle and Asia now is rising again in terms of economic and religious importance.*

Cribbs: *I would be a little cautious about celebrating that. I think civil religion has a way of catching fire and spreading. I appreciate, Jim, your connection between capitalism, its rise, and this sudden flow of Christianity. I would look at how Christianity is practiced in the West, where it has been for a long time. I would look at what's happening in China. In some communities they might call it "rice bowl" Christianity; that is Christianity that is expedient and convenient and helps with one's social mobility. I guess I would caution the celebration of that. But it also goes back to your first question which deals with the message of Jesus. I would like to know how that gets lived out in the lives of persons in China, in the US, and elsewhere where Christianity has touched ground, and how we deal with our interrelationships in our communities; understanding Jesus in that context.*

G *Let me add another question to that. I would also like to raise another question. What do we do, those of us who have lived in the belly of the beast so to speak, and who have come to see so-called Christians in the US behave in the most abominable fashion? The use of the cross by the KKK, it seems to me, symbolizes a large number of Christians. At least, they call themselves Christian.*¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Art Cribbs, William Grier, James Hargett, and Gordon Montgomery, "Another God: Race and Religion in America," DVD, producer, Art Cribbs, San Francisco, CA: Granma's Camera Production, 2004.

Appendix 8

SACRED CONVERSATION II¹⁴⁰

Race and Religion in America

August 16, 2008

Evaluation

(1) Terrible/Never Again (2) Poor (3) Fair (4) Very Good (5) Terrific/Do It Again

Opening _____
Video I – *Jesus Christ, Son of God* _____
Sacred Conversation I _____

Video II – *God of Suffering Peoples* _____
Sacred Conversation II _____

LUNCH _____
Table Conversations _____

Video III – *Another God* _____
Sacred Conversation III _____

Video IV – *God and Racial Identity* _____
Panel Discussion _____

Overall Event _____

Comments

Race/Ethnicity _____

Gender _____

Age _____

¹⁴⁰ “Sacred Conversation II,” evaluation survey, San Marino, CA: San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, September 16, 2008.

Appendix 9

Comments from Sacred Conversation II: Race and Racism in America

*"Wonderful leadership, discussions, and fellowship! The video is a brilliant use of the time to be sure the material is covered. Looking forward to the next one."*¹⁴¹

*"Terrific! Do it again."*¹⁴²

*"Very good! Even, terrific!"*¹⁴³

*"It was really interesting to listen to people with very different experiences. Terrific!"*¹⁴⁴

*"I enjoyed the last large group discussion and hearing the voices of each quest speaker. Deep questions were raised in each segment of DVD and group discussions. Very thought provoking. I was thrilled to be a part of this discussion."*¹⁴⁵

*"More talk needed! It was clear that everyone enjoyed our shared time. With that more time was needed for conversation."*¹⁴⁶

*"I enjoyed it immensely and learned so much. I had the feeling that I would like to have had more time for discussion. However, that would make the day too long. So, perhaps I'll attend another conversation. So much remains to be discussed and experienced."*¹⁴⁷

*"Smaller group (6-8 people) needed. Ours had 12 and was too large."*¹⁴⁸

*"Enjoyed discussions, and need to continue with others."*¹⁴⁹

*"Very Good!"*¹⁵⁰

*"Very good. God has created us with different from one another. Each one has each special and each beautiful. We become beautiful rainbow."*¹⁵¹

*"Terrific! Do it again!"*¹⁵²

*"Terrific! Please continue! This was great!"*¹⁵³

*"Very good."*¹⁵⁴

*"It was terrific! Art, it was great!!!"*¹⁵⁵

¹⁴¹ Female, Caucasian, 56 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁴² Female, Euro-American, 60 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁴³ Male, Caucasian, 61 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁴⁴ Anonymous, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁴⁵ Male, White, 59 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁴⁶ Female, White, 56 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Female, African American, 65 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁴⁸ Female, White/Caucasian/Euro-American, 45 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Male, White, 58 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Male, Indonesian/Asian, 56 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁵¹ Female, Indonesian, 52 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁵² Male, White, 73 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁵³ Female, Latina/Caucasian/German, 75 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Male, Black, 51 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

¹⁵⁵ Male, African American, 75 years old, evaluation form, August 16, 2008.

Appendix 10

Electronic Messages Following Sacred Conversations II

E-Mail #1

"The program today was really terrific! It was nice to have the day broken into segments. I confess that we had not seen the DVD version with the pictures and the new beginning. Very impressive! Also breaking the group up into smaller groups first and then later the entire group is a good strategy. You get the small groups in which most people can at least say one thing, then have a bigger picture in the larger group.

"I don't think having an audience that is mostly black or mostly any one group is a deterrent to a fabulous experience. In an all black group there will be people who have had feelings, but haven't been able to give voice to these feelings. The film will allow them to find that voice and to deepen their thinking about the issues raised in the conversation. I have black students who tell me they learned a lot from the unit on race in my sociology classes (also white students, Asian students, Mexican Am. Students ...).

"Of course I'd like to get the film out to as many people as we can, so I'm not adverse to having people from different churches come. Perhaps those people will invite us to present the film at their churches again. Can we also announce that people can order the film? Thanks so much for today!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"¹⁵⁶

E-Mail #2

"Thanks for putting on SCII today. I liked the way you moderated the event and how enthusiastic you are about having these conversations. I wanted to make some comments in a much more relaxed and complete manner than sitting at the church afterwards.

"1) I liked your emphasis on hearing and sharing personal stories related to the topic. In such a short time it is hard to give every one a chance to tell their story even during a small group session. Some folk need coaxing or need time to formulate their thoughts. I agree that in sharing our past with each other will bring us closer together. The stories I did hear helped me understand better those telling them. How you structure such an event to give people time to tell their stories and then to follow those up with conversations pulling out common ground to stand upon is beyond me in a short period. A Saturday morning men's breakfast group we had in the church tried such a thing as having a different person tell their story or share a hobby each Saturday we met. When everyone had shared, the group seemed to fold up.

"2) Conversations like this depend upon vocabulary that can be very deceptive. For example in physics the key unifying topic is "energy". For example, if you look at a general physics textbook, you will find mechanical energy, electrical energy, magnetic energy, heat energy, atomic energy, kinetic energy, nuclear energy, light energy, sound energy, etc. So, you would think since "energy" is the key concept it would be precisely defined in the text. But, the crazy thing is, is that the definition of "energy" is the sloppiest of all definitions in physics. Usually, books define "energy" as something like "the capability to do work". This is totally not quantifiable on the surface. Whereas, "work" is clearly defined as $F d \cos \phi$. Another example would be, net Force is defined to be ma . The idea here is that most key concepts in physics are precisely defined in terms of an equation involving a formula and the ability to quantify the idea. However, the most

¹⁵⁶ Corrie Ort, e-mail to author, August 16, 2008.

important idea in physics is a fuzzy idea dreamed up by humans to express something that is totally conserved in interactions and comes in a million different forms (so to speak). But, this thing called energy cannot be isolated into a pure form that everyone agrees upon. I see this same thing happening with trying to nail down what everyone means by "God" or "love" for example. We agree on the general terms but the sticking points are in the details and certainly that is why these conversations are so valuable.

"3) My story involves a grandfather (dad's side) who was placed in an orphanage at a very young age. He was called incorrigible. He then was indentured to a farm in Canada where it has been told that life was not much better than living with the pigs they were raising. He escaped to a sister and maybe snuck into the USA and eventually made his way to San Francisco where my dad was born. In the depression he lived in the back of his rundown grocery store on Las Tunas in San Gabriel just 1.4 miles directly south from where I now live. Unfortunately, life has an element of chance associated with it. Some children die in childbirth. Some people get cancer at 17 and are dead at 19. Some are born in Africa and some are born in San Marino. We just have to live to the best of our abilities given the circumstances we have been dealt. I feel extremely blest to have been given 62 years so far. Focusing on the distant past can be very depressing and limiting if the promise of the future is not looked for or sought. We cannot change the past. We can change the future. Helping others to succeed in good things is the golden rule in action. To me it seems the most assured way to find personal genuine meaning in life.

"4) It is amazing to me that if we indeed all came out of Africa how great variety there is in the human species and the conditions we find them living in on this planet. Also, isn't it amazing how well individuals in this species can treat each other and how terrible they can treat each other? The variety of DNA combinations makes this variety of appearance and behavior mind boggling. Only if I had been 6'8" I would have

"5) From these conversations today it became clear again to me how important personal faith vs civil religion is in our lives. Religious faith vs personal survival impinges upon us all and in different ways. Hopefully, being a Christian can make the choices of how we live out our lives less confusing but obviously not always easier. "I agree that the history of Christianity certainly has definite roots in the poor and oppressed and not the wealthy and powerful. I liked the test of God being one of Life rather than Death. Certainly, the poor are always looking for a better life after death. Certainly, with more education we move from primitive Baptist to the UCC. I too look for a God that treats all humans of equal worth. We do have in many respects a childish culture. The test "Is it good for children?" seems valid to me as well. I live in a CCC = Creature Comfort Culture that many are envious of and jealous of. "Birds of a feather flock together. Thanks for a thoughtful time." ¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Scott Cameron, e-mail to author, August 16, 2008.

Appendix 11

Interviews with Members of Congregation

Interview #1

Born and reared in the South and moved to California to get away from family values, person felt ashamed and angry during the Sacred Conversations. He was reminded of attitudes held by his father who supported the cause of the Ku Klux Klan although he never joined the organization. After arriving in California, continued to harbor negative feelings toward Blacks and Jews. He was confronted by his wife who was a teacher and had Black students. It has taken time for him to feel comfortable enough to express his feelings to his Black pastor. In latter years, he has disassociated himself from most family members with the exception of his younger brother. He has a collection of photographs from his childhood and youth; pictures of his family home includes a plantation in Louisiana that once housed slaves. Also, he has a photograph of his high school graduation class in Atlanta, Georgia, that is comprised of all white students. The memories of his upbringing remain a source of deep pain. The Sacred Conversation was an opportunity to reflect on his past and the transformation of his personal life.¹⁵⁸

Interview #2

The son of a Mexican mother, Erik recently married a Mexican doctor. They have a daughter and live in San Diego. They are contemplating a move to Tijuana where his wife works as an anesthesiologist. They are concerned about the quality of education in San Diego public schools, and believe their daughter will receive a much better education in Tijuana.

Erik says there are only two institutions in the United States that can change the society to become more just: the church and unions. He suggests immigrants and migrant workers offer the greatest hope for modeling high morals and true values. They are faithful and hold the family in high esteem. They are hard workers and believe in honest endeavors. They support each other and care for the welfare of children regardless of their relationship to the child.

Erik questions capitalism, globalization, and empire-building. He says human beings are sufferings because corporations have no real regard for their health and well being. He is confident only the church and unions can address and articulate the concerns of people. He also believes the stories of suffering and making the connections between corporate greed and disparities will serve to create solidarity among peoples.

He has worked as a community organizer, faith-base organizer, union organizer, and social justice educator. He currently works for a union. He was raised in the Catholic Church but has become a Protestant in recent years.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Anonymous, interview with author, August 18, 2008.

¹⁵⁹ Erik Olson Fernandez, interview with author, August 20, 2008.

Appendix 12

PUBLIC SAFETY SUNDAY

September 14, 2008

10:00 A.M.

San Marino Congregational

United Church of Christ

2560 Huntington Drive

San Marino, CA 91108

THANK YOU, law enforcement personnel, for your dedication to the people and communities of West San Gabriel Valley. Your departments will be recognized and honored on Public Safety Sunday. It is our way of expressing gratitude and appreciation for your commitment.

You will receive a letter requesting confirmation of a representative from your agency who will attend this event which will feature Mr. Thomas Anderson, formerly of the Justice Training Institute.

We have heard from many of you, and we look forward to this special opportunity to express our appreciation.

In the meantime, mark your calendars and save the date.

Sincerely,

Rev. Art Cribbs

Pastor

San Marino Congregational

United Church of Christ

2560 Huntington Drive

San Marino, CA 91108

(626) 292-2080

www.sanmarinoucc.org¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Art Cribbs, "Public Safety Sunday," electronic announcement, West San Gabriel Valley, CA, August 15, 2008.

Appendix 13

September 14, 2008

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

This certificate is awarded to

The San Gabriel Fire Department

*With Gratitude and Appreciation for
Outstanding Commitment to Public Safety.
We thank the men and women who give
unselfishly to protect and serve our community.*



San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ

Arthur L. Cribbs, Jr.
Pastor Arthur L. Cribbs, Jr.

Connie James-Gilliland
Moderator Connie James-Gilliland

Figure 2.2 Example of certificates distributed to participating agencies

Appendix 14

Electronic Messages Following Public Safety Sunday

E-Mail #1

We enjoyed the event and think it was a success, especially for a first such effort. Ten departments is a fantastic turnout. The dialogue between the officers and congregation seemed mutually beneficial! We felt good about the pre-publicity in the Pasadena Star-News.

*Jill*¹⁶¹

E-Mail #2

We arrived home about 10:30 PM, safe and sound. We also made it to the last tour of the day at Gamble House so that was a special treat. Both Eileen and I made comment about what a wonderful family you have...each one is so precious. We truly enjoyed, absolutely, being with all of you.

I hope the presentation met your expectation, totally! It was a real treat meeting the folks in the congregation and the guest members of the public safety community. I genuinely believe that the First Annual Public Safety Sunday will continue and should continue... It did something very special. Thanks to the wisdom, industry and energy of Art Cribbs.

The overall service on Sunday was enjoyable to be a part of from the choir, the group singing, your sermons and homilies. There was such great balance to it. The special attention given to the kids was really noteworthy.

Arthur, you have a special sense as to what is needed and you deliver in the most meaningful way.

*Bless and take care,
Tom and Eileen*¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Jill Hoffman, e-mail to author, September 15, 2008.

¹⁶² Tom Anderson and Eileen Anderson, e-mail to author, September 15, 2008.

Appendix 15

Comments Following Public Safety Sunday

"We have never done anything like this before. The worship was great."

Connie James Gililland, Church Moderator

"Thank you for honoring our industry. We enjoyed being with your congregation. It was very thoughtful and most unexpected when we received your invitation."

John Schaefer, Chief, San Marino Police Department

"Thank you for inviting us to worship with you today. We are honored to serve our city and to have this special invitation to attend church with your congregation."

John Penido, Fire Chief, City of San Marino

"This was unbelievable. Boy, we are making some new moves!"

Daryl Burns, Member, San Marino UCC

"This was a very special day in the life of our church. I don't remember us having this kind of worship service. It was just great!"

David Crist, Chair, Trustee Board, San Marino UCC

"We really pulled it off. I loved it when you (Art) took the children around the sanctuary to shake the hands of police and firefighters. That was really cool."

Holly Burns, Chair, Deacon Board, San Marino UCC

FORUM ON THE ECONOMY:
**"What is Happening to Our
Money, Houses, and Pensions?"**
Don't Be Afraid. Be Informed!

Thursday, October 16, 2008 at 7:00 P.M.

A forum on the economy, "What Is Happening to Our Money/Pensions: Don't Be Afraid. Be Informed!" will be held at San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ on Thursday, October 16, 2008, at 7:00 P.M. A panel of financial professionals, realtors and psychologist will give insight into the current economic crisis. The purpose of the event is to inform people about what is going on with the economy so they can ask the right questions of their financial and real estate advisers.

THE FORUM IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

"People are worried about their money, their pensions, and their homes...The best thing we can do now is be informed so we can ask the right questions to get the answers we need."

The panel will feature:

Stephen Aronson, *Prudential California Realty*

K Y Cheng, *East West Bank*

William H. Gunnell, *California Bank & Trust*

Jonathan Lewis, *Strauss/Lewis Private
Investment Advisory Group*

Esther Wee, *Cathay Bank*

Charles Weinstein, *Psychologist*



San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ
is located at:

2560 Huntington Drive (where Del Mar meets Winston)
San Marino, CA 91108 DIRECTIONS

For more information, please call (626) 292-2080 or
visit the church's Web site: www.sanmarinoucc.org.

Appendix 17

Program

“In times of crisis it is very human to look at what we do not have control over and to experience feelings of fear, helplessness, and hopelessness.

It is our challenge to view a crisis as an opportunity to focus on those aspects of our lives over which we have control and which can lead us to feelings of positive control and empowerment, which in turn can lead us to a renewed and stronger experience.”

(Dr. Charles Weinstein)

The Purpose:

The nation's economy is facing an unprecedented crisis. Globalization means the United States has an intricate connection to world markets and economies. In a phrase, “We are all in this together.” We will explore where we are and how we can move forward with good information to ask the appropriate questions to receive the most helpful answers from our financial and real estate advisors. This special period affords us the opportunity to re-form community and work together to build a ‘more perfect union’ in this region.

Welcome and Introductions

Rev. Art Cribbs

The Panel

Stephen Aronson - Realtor, Manager, Prudential California Realty

Steve Aronson has had a long and successful real estate career beginning in 1976. Steve came to the San Gabriel Valley in 1989 and currently resides in San Marino. He oversees the operation of the office and monitors the transactions.

K Y Cheng - Executive Vice President and Director of International Trade Banking
East West Bank

K Y Cheng has over 25 years of experience in banking and has focused his career on international, corporate and correspondent banking. Prior to joining East West in 1999, he was the general manager of the Pacific Rim Business Division at Union Bank of California. He also serves on the boards of the Los Angeles-Long Beach World Trade Center Association and the National Association of Chinese American Bankers, and chairs the Pacific Rim Committee of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.

William H. Gunnell - Executive Vice President and Los Angeles Commercial Region
Manager, California Bank & Trust

Bill Gunnell has 30 years of commercial and international banking experience. He assumed his position at California Bank & Trust upon its formation in October, 1998. He resides in San Marino and is active in a number of professional and community activities, including Past President of San Marino City Club and a Director of the San Gabriel Valley Boy Scouts.

Jonathan A. Lewis - Managing Director – Investments, Strauss/Lewis Private Investment Advisory Group of Wachovia Securities LLC

Jonathan Lewis has been a Financial Advisor since 1994. After six years with Smith Barney, Jonathan joined a predecessor of Wachovia Securities as a Senior Vice President of Investments in September 2000. He has extensive experience in the fixed-income and equity markets.

Esther Wee - Senior Vice President & Manager, Multicultural Corporate Lending Group Cathay Bank

Esther Wee has more than 25 years experience in domestic and international banking, including commercial and real estate lending, international trade finance, foreign exchange and capital markets. She is President of the Singapore American Business Association of Southern California, board member of the Asian American Chamber Association; serves on the Saint Felicitas & Perpetua Church Financial Board and is the former treasurer of Chinese Club of San Marino.

Dr. Charles Weinstein - Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Dr. Charles Weinstein provides evaluation, assessment, and treatment for children, adolescents, and adults. He has been practicing clinical psychology for over 20 years. Dr. Weinstein earned a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Southern California, and an A.B. with Honors in Psychology from Brown University. He also has a Diplomate in Clinical Psychology from the American Board of Professional Psychology. Dr. Weinstein is presently Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. He is an adult volunteer with the San Marino BSA Troop 355 and past Vice President and President of the Partners for Awareness in San Marino.

The Audience Participation

Please use the cards provided to write your questions and comments for the panel. The moderator will read as many of your cards as time allows.

Closing Statements

Panelists

Special Acknowledgements

Special thanks is extended to **Ms. Janice Lee, Realtor** and Estate Director of the Prudential California Realty Company; **Mr. Jerry Wang**, Vice President of the Chinese School and Senior Advisor of the Chinese Club, San Marino; and **Mr. Clive Hoffman** and **Ms. Jill Hoffman** of Clive Hoffman and Associates, Beverly Hills, for their extraordinary efforts to coordinate this evening's forum. Also, we wish to express great appreciation to the members and staff of the San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ for making this forum possible.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ "Forum on the Economy," program bulletin, San Marino, CA, San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, October 16, 2008.

Appendix 18

**CONTACT: JILL HOFFMAN
CLIVE HOFFMAN ASSOCIATES
310-205-9930**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAN MARINO CHURCH TO HOST ECONOMIC FORUM

SAN MARINO, CA: (OCTOBER 13, 2008) – “The current economic crisis being experienced by our nation is having an impact on almost every part of our community, including members of our congregations, families and friends,” says the Rev. **Art Cribbs**, pastor of the **San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC)**. “We have decided to become proactive and try to help families in our community to understand the realities behind the headlines.”

Taking the first step to accomplish this objective, Rev. Cribbs said his church will be the site of an important informational meeting entitled “*Forum on the Economy: What’s Happening to our Money/Housing/Pensions – Don’t be Afraid, Become Informed.*” The session will be held at the church located at 2560 Huntington Drive in San Marino, CA. on Thursday, October 16, 2008, from 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM. The program is free to the public.

Participating in the discussion will be: **Stephen Aronson**, manager of Prudential Real Estate’s Pasadena office; **Andrew Barth**, president, Capital Guardian Trust Company, a division of **Capital Group**, one of the world’s largest institutional fund managers; **K.Y. Cheng**, Executive Vice President and Director of International Trade Banking East West Bank; **William Grunnell**, commercial banking specialist and vice

president of California Bank & Trust Company; **Esther Wee**, international market specialist and vice president and manager of Cathay Bank; and psychologist **Dr. Charles Weinstein**. Rev. Cribbs will moderate the discussion.

“People are being barraged by often conflicting and mostly extremely disquieting news on a variety of fronts, including foreclosures, declining housing prices, bankruptcies of major financial institutions and the potential loss of their retirement savings,” said Rev. Cribbs. “This is causing many to panic, which isn’t either productive or necessary. The best thing people can do at this moment is become informed so they can ask the right questions, get the correct answers and make informed decisions.”

For more information about the economic forum, call San Marino Congregational UCC at (626) 292-2080.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Clive Hoffman, “San Marino Church to Host Economic Forum,” press release, Beverly Hills, CA: Clive Hoffman and Associates Public Relations, October 13, 2008.

Appendix 19

EVALUATION OF PROJECT EVENTS

Over the past two years, you were invited to participate in events held at San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, including plays in our new Stillspeaking Theatre, Sacred Conversations on Race and Racism in America, Public Safety Sunday, and a Forum on the Economy.

Your voice and opinions about events you attended are greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes and share your comments about how the following events affected your life, faith, or world view.

StillSpeaking Theatre

1. *Awaiting Judgment*, a play about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dietrich Bonhoeffer exchanging views on decisions they made.

In what way did this production affect your view about King, Bonhoeffer, and social justice? I was impressed with the staging, acting, and overall premise of this play. Facing death and how it can challenge one's fundamental beliefs is a very serious issue that I don't like to face. It definitely made me appreciate what great men go through when caught in the dilemma living or dying because of a belief/faith stance.

How were you affected by its message? I felt sad that this stance can be so dark, discouraging, and disconnecting for daily life. The protagonists here are not normal people but rather extraordinary individuals that had gifts far outreaching those of most mortals. Gifts that include inspiring visions for a people and the ability to think deeply of what it means to have a deep faith in God and to risk life itself because of it.

Did you feel challenged to change your life or become more actively involved in social justice? The challenge for me was how far to take sacrificing my life for a cause whether it be religious or a fundamental personal belief. For me it is conditional upon the character of the moment it becomes an issue for me. I'm not sure if I can be an absolutist when it comes to predicting my behavior in a given situation. Situational ethics is a part of me I cannot devoid of my inner being.

Would you recommend this play to someone? To anyone in seminary or in the fields of ethics, law, philosophy, theatre, sociology, history, and any sort of ministry.

Other comment: This play stands unique in my mind in bringing together two strong individuals under one "jail" roof that speaks volumes about what it means to act on a deeply personal belief. The "jail" roof struck me as impregnable during their life time which struck me as very moving and yet depressing.

2. *The Runner Stumbles*, a play about a Catholic priest and nun who face their life choices to take a vow of celibacy and enter ministry.

In what way did this play cause you to think about choices you make for yourself? I attended protestant seminary for a year and a half to become a protestant minister. I loved the theology classes and the discussions with the other students. But, I came to realize my marriage would probably not survive well or at all if I had actually become a minister. My speaking style and general approach to solving social problems did not seem well suited for the protestant ministry that I was familiar with at that time. This play was very confusing to me from a strange title that never connected with me to a set of characters that had far too many demons that Catholicism and other religions confront in the day to day practice of their clergy that I found easy to solve but the play could not. I am quite thankful for the choice I made for my basic career and this play in some sense made me more thankful.

How did it affect your view of commitment? This play did not make me think of my own personal commitments probably because I could not identify closely with any of the characters. I could not see myself acting like any of them.

What message did you take from the play? I wanted to look up the history of the event it was based on since I have vacationed in Michigan many times. The cold winters up there can be very tough on people and the many miners of upper Michigan were living subsistence lives that were dark and depressing. After all they spent their working lives in holes in the ground. We hear there is about one body per day found dumped in the mountains north of L.A., Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. Murder because of some secret knowledge carried by the victim is depressing and not uplifting.

Would you recommend this play to someone else? This is a play for those who are independent individuals who love to study actions caused by human interactions similar to soap operas which I have no affinity. I came across this review of a movie of this play: Stanley Kramer's 1979 movie version of "The Runner Stumbles". Great movie! 28 June 2008

Author: Chickory from United States

I first saw this movie in 1983 when I went out west to see my boyfriend. He was a river runner & was living in a house full of the same. Because river runners are in & out of the house on multi-day trips, many people used the house as their crash pad between trips. The point is that the house was full of people. This came on HBO and a bunch of us watched it with rapt attention. Later that day, it came on again and we all sat there and watched it again! How good is a movie when a house full of people watch the same movie twice in one day! I have never understood why more people have not heard of or seen this movie. It is wonderful. It is not a slam bam action movie, it is more about character and how people evolve through interaction with others even though external events may not allow for it. I have never forgotten this movie and I am going to chase down my own copy. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0079831/>

Other comment: It was a dark play with not much uplifting to hurting people in the 21st Century.

3. *Facing East*, a play about a Mormon couple coping with the suicide of their gay son.

In what way did you identify with the characters? I identified with the Mormon position (not necessarily accepted) more than the characters. That is, the overall premise was clear. The agony of gay and lesbian youth born into traditional Christian families can be almost untenable to face. Having first hand experience with this issue I know the angst that all individuals involved must endure. Thankfully, great progress in human understanding of this issue has occurred in the last twenty years but we are no where near a resolution of the life-threatening prejudice that still exists.

How did you view the parents' reaction to homosexuality? I could identify with it but I didn't support it.

What message did you take from the play? The agony on both sides of this issue can lead to outlandish emotion as well as murder and suicide.

Would you recommend this play to someone else? To all those involved in human development careers as well as anyone who struggles what it really means to love your neighbor as yourself.

Other comment: Every culture has modes of dealing with death and those that act outside the accepted norms are usually ostracized in some way or killed. The question always is: Is the good of the many worth the loss of a few?

4. *The Mystery Plays*, two one-act plays loosely connected that delve into the lives of people caught up in events that caused them to ponder deeper meanings of life.

In what ways did you connect with the characters? I had real trouble connecting to the title "The Mystery Plays". First impressions are most important and I found it hard to resolve this title with what was going on stage.

How was the issue of evil presented? Someone acting alone committing crimes is always easy to write off as mentally deranged due to one or more reasons. These two plays seemed so dark that I left not caring that the acting was excellent. I was asking myself why can't I be uplifted by the StillSpeaking Theatre. Life is difficult and I want to think positive about the future. If I wanted to study the cause of crime I would be in some pathological endeavor.

What message did you take from the play? Why would anyone want to attend our church after seeing these plays unless they are serious theatre buffs?

Would you recommend this play to someone else? No

Other comment: The acting for all these plays was excellent. However, the content in general does not fit the audience that lives in this area of the San Gabriel Valley.

Sure the content of the plays was challenging but I found little hope, little happiness, and little help in trying to enjoy life at SMCC. Balance in life is very important. I felt very unbalanced by the themes presented in these plays. I know murder and the breaking of religious and cultural mores exists. Life lived continually in winter without a spring and summer is not healthy. I want to be healthy and I know others will act upon that desire and seek spring and summer where ever they can find it ... as do I. "We must not permit our respect for the dead or our sympathy for the living to lead us into an act of injustice to the balance of the living." Davy Crockett

Sacred Conversation on Race and Racism in America

A forum on race and racism was held in the aftermath of media criticism of the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright, retired pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois, during the presidential campaign of Barack Obama.

In what way did the conversation address race and racism in America? Realistically, Thoughtfully, and Personally in a calm and straightforward manner

How did the conversation affect your view of race and racism? Not much

What message or perspective did you take from the conversation? People are hopeful for a better future in human relations in this area.

Would you participate in another conversation on race and racism? Probably not. I don't have anything new or profound to offer in this area.

Other comment: Texas El Paso beating Kentucky for the NCAA championship in basketball and USC beating Alabama in a notorious college football game are two landmark events that signified for me that racism as an acceptable national way of life was certainly not going to last. Rev. Art Cribbs Jr. being called to serve a church in San Marino and Barack Obama being elected President of the United States are two events that speak that same message clearly to me.

Public Safety Sunday

In what way did this event affect or inform your understanding of religion and public life? I liked our recognizing these individuals and it sent a positive message that SMCC really cares.

How did commemorating Public Safety Sunday during worship feel to you? I felt the safety people that attended appreciated the attention but probably felt it was a working event for them. Just another duty to perform.

In the aftermath of 9/11, what message did this event convey? At least one church is thankful for what they do.

Would you want Public Safety Sunday to continue with law enforcement and fire personnel? Not every year but probably on some basis that is meaningful.

Other comment:

Forum on the Economy

In what way did this event address your concerns about the economy? It was comforting to hear the opinions of this wide selection of local professional people.

How can such an event be more effective in assisting persons affected by the economy? Small group time with audience choice for asking questions of individual professionals.

As the economy challenges experts and everyday people, how did this event prepare you? Not much. The devil is in the details of each person's predicament and those details are hard to nail down in a short time without the use of future history. 20/20 hindsight

Would you participate in another forum on the economy? I would attend but participate means?

Would you recommend such an event to someone else? It would depend on who, what, when, where, and why?

Other comments: Why is it we always have to bail out people who make poor decisions which in turns and enables them to repeat the act in the same or different manner again? Unless a sensible, pragmatic answer to this question is generally accepted, there will always be economic gridlock in policy matters.¹⁶⁵

Public Safety Sunday

In what way did this event affect or inform your understanding of religion and public life? To recognize we are here for faith community.

How did commemorating Public Safety Sunday during worship feel to you? Sunday is only date most people get off, worship service is center of God's house, people cut each corner come to listen of God's message. I felt those Public Serv people to get recognize.

In the aftermath of 9/11, what message did this event convey?
Be alert/ be awake.

Would you want Public Safety Sunday to continue with law enforcement and fire personnel?

¹⁶⁵ white male member of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, e-mail to author, February 10, 2009.

I prefer to recognize remarkable events for those authorities have done for the community perhaps we could change title as: Public Honorable Sunday!¹⁶⁶

“This series of outreach opportunities represents a classy and admirable message of serious sophisticated engagement with our community and our world. I was not at most of these events, because I live at a distance and usually attend the local Methodist church to be with my wife in our recent marriage, but I rejoice that they were held, and that the promotion of them communicates that a healthy progressive faith is practiced at our church. Well done!”¹⁶⁷

”Thank you! This was great! Now that we have focused on what is happening to the value of our stuff and information to reduce fear, how about a panel on the last suggestion by the psychologist...schedule a time to worry, then find a way to de-stress; how to reach out to others; live life; find others who need help; by giving to others we help ourselves...Versus...stop focusing on the material and focus on the community, emotional and spiritual and physical health. Back to basics: information to inject hope, possibilities, and a new future based on real values. Multi-cultural, globalization issues, community building, cooperation on global warming, education, and peace; Bring together humanist, minister, imam, rabbi, monk, etc. Suggestions: nutritionist, physician meditation/stress expert; human and social services agencies, including food and homeless services; green living expert; simple living expert.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Taiwanese female member of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, e-mail sent to author, February 12, 2009.

¹⁶⁷ white male member of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, e-mail sent to author, February 12, 2009.

¹⁶⁸ white, female clergy, conversation with author, October 16, 2008.

Appendix 20

Welcome to San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ

“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”

Located in the Heart of Our City

We are located at 2560 Huntington Drive (at the corner of Huntington Drive and Del Mar Avenue) in the heart of the City of San Marino, home of the Huntington Library and one of Southern California’s most affluent suburban communities. At one time, San Marino was considered one of the most traditionally conservative areas in the nation. Today, it is a city in transition. Nearly half the population represents Asian heritages which have broadened the community’s cultural diversity. However, many of our worshippers come from neighboring communities, some from many miles away.

Everyone is Welcome

We are an “*Open & Affirming*” congregation. All people are welcome without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, age, sexual orientation, political affiliation, family circumstance, or place on life’s spiritual journey.

Parking

As you arrive, you will notice a tall Spire (kind of a free-standing steeple) near the Sanctuary along the Del Mar side of our campus. Beyond it to the south is our church parking lot, which is at lower level than the Sanctuary. We do not have elevators, so wheelchair users or special needs visitors should take advantage of curbside parking near the Spire and use the ramp to the Sanctuary. Also, there is street parking and an available parking lot across the street from the church.

Child Care

Ushers/Greeters will be waiting inside the Sanctuary door to give you a bulletin, answer questions, and direct you to our several well-hidden restrooms. Childcare is provided downstairs in our nursery. We have a licensed, professional caretaker to attend to small children, including infants.

Casual and Comfortable Clothing

You are welcome to dress up or come casually. A Hawaiian shirt would not be out of place. Slacks or skirts are absolutely appropriate for women. Children wear clothing that is appropriate in public schools. Sanctuary temperatures tend to be on the warm side in the summer and cool in the winter, so please dress more for comfort than style.

Inclusive and Traditional

We strive to use inclusive English language during the worship service. Also, you may hear a fair amount of humor. Our worship is traditional, which means most of our people are quiet and not overly demonstrative with hugs and kisses or waving and chanting.

Prelude to Worship

We begin our Sunday morning worship at 10:00. Although many people arrive just minutes before the service begins, you are invited to come early and listen to the beautiful music played by our pianist. Also, a very creative and informative slide presentation is projected to introduce you to the activities of our congregation.

Worship Service

Our worship service is about 60 to 75 minutes. It begins with music by the choir, which typically processes in and helps lead the congregation in song. Slides on the front projection system guide the participants through the service.

Children's Worship

After lighting of candles, singing hymns, opening prayer, and singing another song, children are called forward for a short time with the Pastor. Afterward, they are excused to attend one of two age-appropriate classes downstairs, including *Children's Worship and Wonder*, a specially-designed Bible study. Visiting children are encouraged to join these groups, but it is also acceptable for them to remain with their family.

Order of Service

Our worship service continues with the Scripture by the liturgist, sacred music by the choir, and the sermon. During *Our Common Life*, an offering is collected, announcements are shared, and we dedicate ourselves and our gifts to Christ's mission. We invite public sharing of prayer requests, sing a closing hymn, and receive the benediction. The worship service ends with the extinguishing of the candles (which we call "changing of the light") and music to send us forth.

Communion

On the First Sunday of each month, children remain in the Sanctuary to celebrate the Sacrament of Communion. We serve Communion by intinction--dipping a piece of bread into a cup of grape juice. All are invited. Anyone who wishes is welcome at the Table up front.

Fellowship

Following Sunday morning worship, everyone is invited to go to our Fellowship Hall for refreshments, conversations, and fellowship. It's a chance for us to get to know you. We're looking forward to doing just that and hope you enjoy your visit!¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Art Cribbs and Warren Scherffius, profile, San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, April 7, 2009.

Appendix 21

Service gives peace a chance

By Sandi Dolbee
RELIGION & ETHICS EDITOR

September 3, 2006

Eleanor Roosevelt, who was America's first lady during most of World War II, said that it isn't enough to believe in peace. "One must work at it," she said.

Her words were recited Wednesday night, during an interfaith worship service for peace, where children marched in with globes of the world and people sat shoulder to shoulder in church pews.

The Rev. Art Cribbs got the idea for the gathering a few weeks ago, as he watched divisive e-mail messages about the Israeli-Hezbollah violence fly like written rockets between people active in San Diego interreligious efforts.

"It was at that point I realized what was happening in the Middle East wasn't just happening there," said Cribbs, pastor of Christian Fellowship Congregational Church, where the service was held. "It really had an impact here."

The prayers and songs for reconciliation and healing also included an offering for Doctors Without Borders, an independent medical aid group.

Throughout San Diego County, there have been ongoing fund-raising efforts for both sides of the conflict's victims. And while a fragile cease-fire is in place in that troubled region, conscience-motivated responses to more than a month of violence, along with the continuing war in Iraq, remain quite active here.

Among upcoming events:

Hundreds are expected to attend a Labor Day rally and concert in support of Israel, 5 to 7 p.m. at the San Diego Jewish Academy, 11860 Carmel Creek Road. At 7 p.m. Wednesday, Congregation Beth Israel will hold a "Stand With Israel" gathering, 9001 Towne Centre Drive, University City.

A relatively new, national evangelical group called Christians United For Israel also is making plans for San Diego activities. "Israel is the only nation that God established," said Greg Stephens, pastor of Father's House Church in Talmadge and director of the local chapter. "We're waking up to the fact that this is our true friend in that part of the world."

San Diego peace activists are preparing for a week of nonviolent civil disobedience beginning Sept. 21 as part of a nationwide campaign to end the war in Iraq. Thirteen people were at San Diego's First Church of the Brethren Thursday night for an orientation session about civil disobedience. One seasoned protester noted that polls show declining support for the war. "We're making a difference," said Hal Brody.



Another interfaith peace service has been set for 7 p.m. Oct. 8 at First Unitarian Universalist Church in Hillcrest.

Cribbs does not think taking sides is helpful. "Someone has to really stand in a place where people who are at each other's throats can turn as an alternative," he said.

But Wednesday's messages were not entirely neutral. The Rev. Peter Ruggere, a Roman Catholic priest who also used to be a United Nations observer in East Timor, was critical of U.S. attitudes toward international law, particularly regarding Iraq and Israel. "Without just situations on the ground, there will never be peace," he said.

Also, there was only one representative of Jewish clergy, as opposed to several Christians, two Muslim imams, a Buddhist abbot and a Baha'i. Cribbs said invitations were sent to about five rabbis, but the only participant was Rabbi Alexis Pearce, who is in the Reconstructionist movement, the smallest of Judaism's branches.

Pearce said she doesn't think there's a conscious resistance among Jewish clergy. "I think people are all very busy."

Rabbi Scott Meltzer, president of the San Diego Rabbinical Association and leader of Ohr Shalom Synagogue, agreed. He received an invitation and thought the program looked interesting, but he had a commitment.

"My guess is that a month before the high holidays, very few people have time to come to a program like this," Meltzer said. Rosh Hashana, the Jewish new year, begins sundown Sept. 22.

Wednesday's gathering drew a nearly capacity crowd, with little room left in the two dozen pews, and went on for more than 90 minutes. The keynote talk was delivered by a Point Loma Nazarene University professor, who told the audience the world is complex, and problems can seem overwhelming. But, added Jamie Gates, "God makes wars cease."

Kangelo Mango, 37, who has been in San Diego for five years, came for one reason: to pray for peace. "Everybody needs peace, especially me," he said. "I'm from Sudan, where there is a war in Darfur."

Beth Kinney, 49, came with her mother, Pat Perry, a 77-year-old Bonita woman who was much younger when Mrs. Roosevelt was in the White House and grew up to admire her contributions.

What good can come out of services like this one? "It couldn't hurt," said Kinney. "And it just might help," her mother added.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Sandi Dolbee. "Service Gives Peace A Chance." San Diego Union Tribune, September 3, 2006, <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/features/20060902-9999-1c02faith.html> (accessed March 23, 2009).

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